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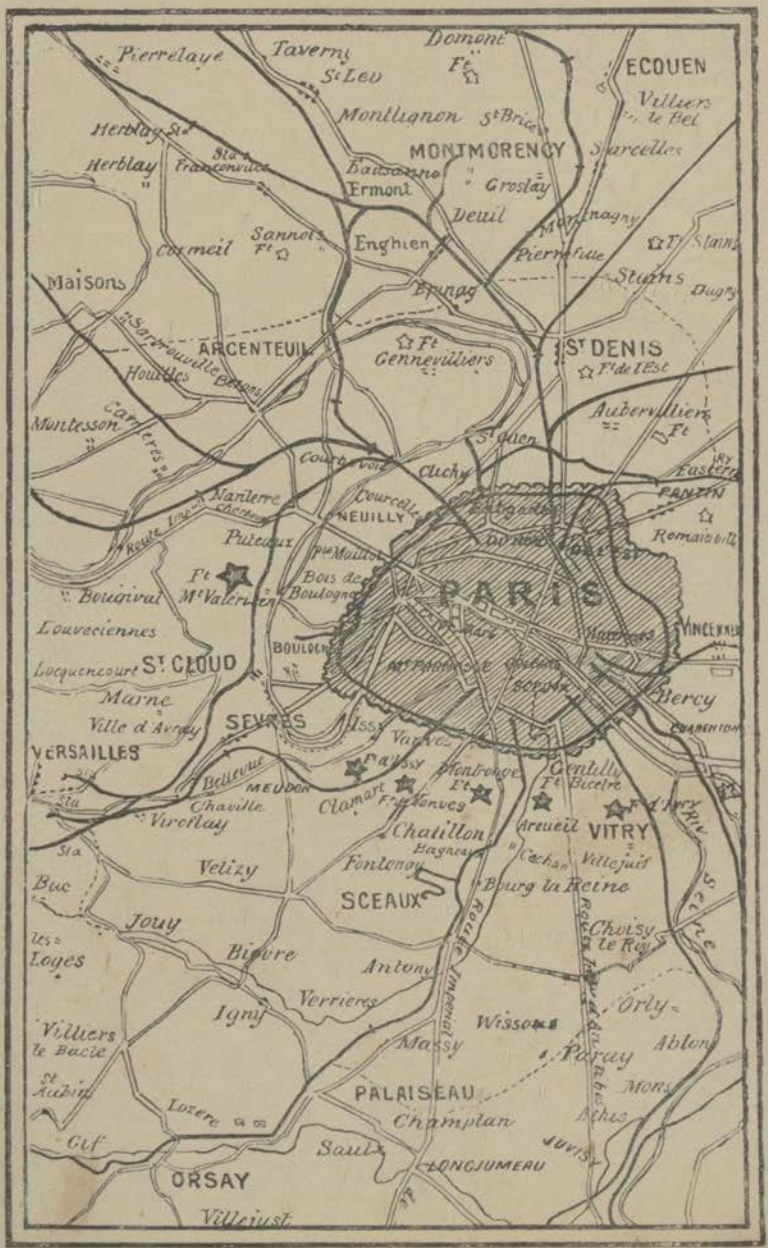
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THE HISTORY OF THE
PARIS COMMUNE OF 1871

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BY

THOMAS MARCH

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London
SWAN SONNENSCHEIN & CO. LTD
PATERNOSTER SQUARE
1896

Butler & Tanner,
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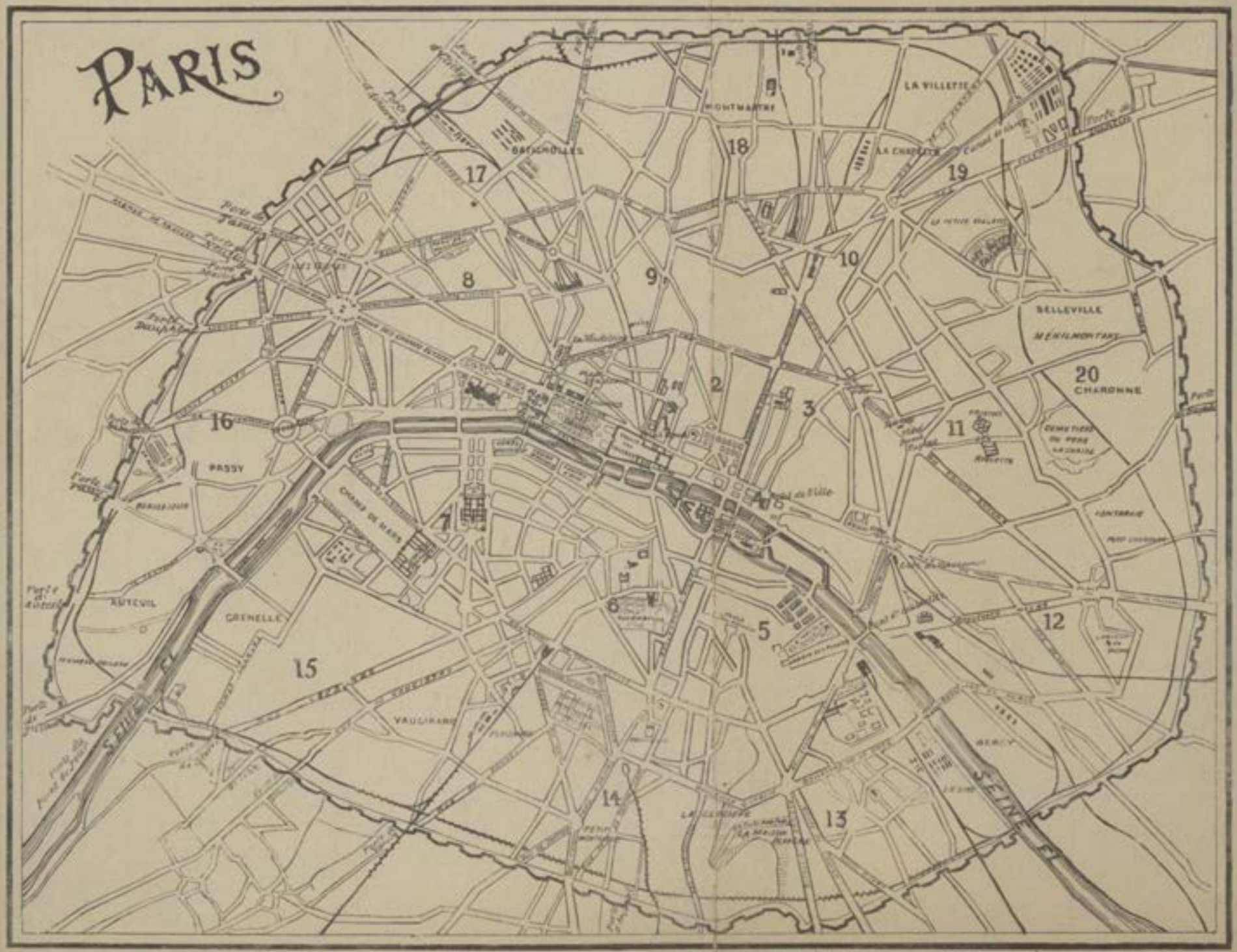
DEDICATED

WITH UNFAILING ADMIRATION OF HER

MANY EXCELLENT QUALITIES

TO

MY WIFE



The figures denote the Arrondissements into which Paris is divided.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGES
	List of Authorities	vii
I.	Introductory	1–13
II.	Sunday, September 4th, 1870	14–22
III.	September 5th to 18th, 1870	23–32
IV.	„ 19th to 31st October, 1870 . .	33–51
V.	November 1st to December 31st, 1870 . .	52–63
VI.	January 1st to middle of February, 1871 .	64–80
VII.	From the middle of February to March 17th, 1871	81–99
VIII.	The 18th March, 1871	100–115
IX.	Paris under the Comité Central, March 19th to 27th, 1871	116–141
X.	The Communal Elections — Results and Analyses	142–147
PARIS UNDER THE COMMUNE		148–247
THE EIGHT DAYS OF MAY:—		
First day,	Sunday, May 21st, 1871 . .	248–255
Second „	Monday, „ 22nd, „ . .	256–272
Third „	Tuesday, „ 23rd, „ . .	273–288
Fourth „	Wednesday, „ 24th, „ . .	289–308
Fifth „	Thursday, „ 25th, „ . .	309–320
Sixth „	Friday, „ 26th, „ . .	321–334
Seventh „	Saturday, „ 27th, „ . .	335–340
Eighth „	Sunday, „ 28th, „ . .	341–344
Conclusion		345–355
Index		357–372

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Etc., etc.

References are made to the above under the word or words italicised.

HISTORY

OF THE

PARIS COMMUNE OF 1871

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

SELDOM is it that a popular movement of historical importance should take its rise, mature, and end within the brief space of a year, yet such a rarity is presented by the Paris Commune of 1871. The incidents of this movement, compact almost beyond precedent, are of thrilling interest, and rank among the most remarkable events of modern times. Notwithstanding the twenty-four years which have elapsed since 1871, the reminiscence of the Paris Commune is still an active influence in French affairs. To the Governments of every civilized country that Commune is an object-lesson which cannot, or at least should not, be lost sight of, for the human passions and aspirations which found expression then are still in existence, and may again, under different guises, make manifest their depth and power.

To understand all the currents of thought which helped to sweep the Commune into being, some knowledge of the reign of the Emperor Napoleon III. is necessary, and therefore the rule of that monarch must first be briefly adverted to. It was on the 10th December, 1848, that Louis Napoleon Buonaparte, nephew of the great Napoleon, was chosen President of France, under a republican form of government. Three years later, after prolonged friction between himself and the National Assembly, he forcibly dissolved the latter, and maintained the irregular position thus created until it was confirmed by the French people, to whom he appealed by means of a plébiscite. A year later—December 2nd, 1852—Buonaparte restored the

imperial form of government, styling himself Napoleon III. This act, also, was subsequently sanctioned by the nation.

The Emperor ruled with firmness and tact, and dazzled the sentimental turn of the French intellect by the elaborate splendour of his court. He engaged in various wars with more or less success, and by this and other means consolidated and established his government. The development of socialistic and democratic ideas was restrained with a strong hand, though this feature of his regime did not prevent the Emperor doing what, to his mind, constituted liberal things for the working classes, to whom, therefore, little indulgences accrued from time to time. One instance of this politic trait occurred in 1862, when, by the aid of a subvention from the Imperial Government and the town of Paris, certain French workmen were sent to visit the great exhibition which was being held that year in London, in order to study the products and methods of English industry. Truly a benevolent and, one would think, harmless mission; nevertheless, the intercourse of the French and English artisans gave rise to a project for founding an International Association of Workers for the furtherance of the workmen's interests in their respective countries, and such an outcome of the Emperor's liberality was totally unexpected and undesired by him. The idea took root slowly; it was not put into concrete shape until two years afterwards, when the nucleus of the Association was formed. The Imperial Government of France tolerated no political associations, and therefore the newly born body was of necessity non-political, and it apparently was also voluntarily so, for it refused to permit any prominent politician to preside over its infancy and patronize its members. Its headquarters were at London, and branches were in Paris, Berlin, and other continental cities. One of the French workmen who were concerned in forming it was a book-binder, named Varlin, who, though only twenty-four years old, had already gained some renown by the earnestness and enthusiasm he had shown in promoting the welfare of the Parisian workmen. Varlin was employed by his uncle, and one day the latter suggested to him that he should marry one of his nieces, in which case the book-binding business would be settled upon him. But, no; Varlin would never enrich himself by the labour

of working men, neither would he marry, for his family—the oppressed !—was ready to hand.[1]

The International Association speedily increased in numbers and influence. It was joined after some time by another international body—of freethinkers, from the junction with which dates a deviation from its non-political character. Freethinkers (so called) are averse to priests and religions, and it is impossible to exclude politics from an atheistical propaganda. The newcomers, as well, perhaps, as a portion of the original body, considered that the miseries and injustices under which the working classes suffer could be radically alleviated or removed only by a violent revolution; and it was in accordance with this impression that, at a congress held at Geneva in 1866, under the auspices of the International Association, certain Frenchmen were invited to attend it because of the revolutionary speeches they had made a short while before at Liege. Among these were two persons named Tridon and Protot. Notwithstanding this, the revolutionary elements were in a minority at the congress.

The International Association had by then ramifications all over Paris and France. There were hundreds of various trades' or co-operative societies affiliated to it, all of which received a general inspiration and support from the central office. Early in 1867 there came an opportunity to test its strength. Several large employers of bronze-workers in Paris became alarmed at the numbers of their workpeople that belonged to the trade unions, and gave them the option of ceasing so to do or of relinquishing work at their factories. The workmen at once chose the latter alternative and were joined by the non-unionists, so that a general strike ensued. The International Association supported the action of the strikers, sent to England for assistance—and obtained it; which two facts bore such fruit that the Paris employers receded from the position they had taken up, and the workmen returned to their labours triumphant. The International Association benefited largely by the prestige which this affair gave it.

In the same year the Association held its annual congress at

[1] Faillet, p. 12.

Lausanne. Whilst it did so, another congress, composed entirely of French republican politicians—headed by M. Jules Favre, the leader of the Opposition party in the Legislative Assembly—met at Geneva under the title of the League of Peace and Liberty, and made overtures to the democratic International—overtures which the latter reciprocated, but, in its own mind, attached too much importance to. A few months afterwards the Parisian Internationalists indulged in a novel enterprise; to wit, an open-air political demonstration. After the interchange of compliments which had occurred in Switzerland, the Internationalists not unnaturally expected the personal support of M. Jules Favre at their demonstration; but this gentleman did not appear, and, in consequence, was written to and expostulated with. M. Favre, however, esteemed himself too considerable a personage to be connected intimately with workmen or with a manifestation that was sure to come under the ægis of Napoleonic law; he curtly replied that there was no alliance betwixt them. The demonstration had more tangible result in attracting the attention of the police, as a result of which the executive commission of the International was by legal process dissolved, and its leaders fined 100 francs each.

Undeterred, but rather confirmed and emboldened by this, the Internationalist chiefs formed a second executive, which issued a document advocating more advanced and communistical ideas than the Association had hitherto ventured to proclaim. A second process of law ensued, and this time the leaders were imprisoned. None the less, the International Association increased both in power and in the general adoption of extreme views. By the time of the next congress—held at Brussels in 1868—these advanced opinions had so gained ground, that now it was the moderate party which constituted the lesser number. In this congress the revolutionary element abounded, and included among its representatives various newspaper writers, of whom the most prominent was one Blanqui, an elderly man of brilliant capacities but of rebellious and pusillanimous spirit, which on numberless occasions had procured for him imprisonments and condemnations.

The principal measures advocated in these congresses were

as follow: denial of the right of a private individual to possess property; abrogation of inheritance; separation of Church from State, and confiscation of ecclesiastical properties; equality of the sexes; equality of men; combination of the workmen of all countries against the employers, the necessary corollary of this being the abandonment of the principles of nationality and patriotism; prohibition of religious teaching to children; the establishment of communes which should be in fact what they were in name, places where all things should be possessed in common, where there should be neither privilege nor oppression, poverty nor wealth, idleness nor overwork, and where injustice should be swallowed up in a new system of social order: such was the vast ideal which the members of the congresses set before them and laboured to accomplish. The practical difficulties in the way were ignored or unthought of; the wrongs that would necessarily follow the realization of their rights were also unperceived or contemptuously scouted.

The men who held these opinions were not isolated enthusiasts. They represented a very considerable public, composed chiefly of the working classes in Paris and other large towns of France, but including various persons of social position, and journalists of advanced views. This public had for generations been without any deep religious feeling; it had now, for the most part, none. It was free to accept principles and believe theories which not any religion of civilization would approve; with which intellectual liberty, however, there unfortunately was coupled, as frequently happens, a narrowness of mind which excluded the perception that the dogmas seized on with such avidity were in many cases only half true, and even when wholly true, that they were not to be selfishly appropriated by any particular class of society, but applied with equal force to the entire community. It was this particular portion of the French nation that once more was becoming inflated with the ideal beauty of universal suffrage; it was talked and written to concerning the latent power it possessed; the socialistic writings of Proudhon were elaborated in clubs, assemblies, and journals; whilst the irksome discipline incurred under the firm and somewhat arbitrary rule which swayed over France was held up to odium, and regarded only as the outcome of an antiquated and

despotic form of government. All these things sunk deeply into the mind of the urban artisans and labourers; the inculcations were laid to heart, strengthened, at Paris, by the brilliancy of the Imperial Court, which contrasted so markedly with their own abject condition. To these people, and to their leaders, the end justified the means: the end was said to be universal happiness and justice; the means were to be any and every—it was not a matter of solicitude.

To agitators and revolutionists opportunity is of the first importance, and it was only for a fitting occasion that the French Socialists waited and longed. They were mentally prepared for any event that might occur by which their propaganda might be realized. It was in such expectant frame of mind that a naturalized American of French birth, named Cluseret, wrote from New York to Varlin in Paris early in 1870: "That day we must be ready physically and morally. It shall be, that day, us or nothing. I say again, that day Paris will be ours, or Paris will no longer exist."

Cluseret and Varlin had become acquainted with each other in the prison of Ste. Pélagie about two years previously, both of them having been imprisoned for political offences. Such imprisonments were very frequent during the years 1868, 1869, and the first half of 1870. The offences generally consisted of newspaper articles which attacked the Empire, seditious speeches at public meetings, manifestations against the existing authorities, and occasionally an open revolt. It thus happened that most of the Internationalist chiefs and socialistic and revolutionary writers in the Parisian press found themselves at one time or another in prison, often more than once. The natural result of such political intolerance was further to embitter the minds of the prisoners and their adherents against the Emperor and all the bureaucracy and officialism which he represented, and to confirm in their opinion the necessity for a new and better society.

The docility with which for many years the Emperor's rule had been endured by the working classes in the large towns of France had now completely vanished, and opposition thereto was freely manifested. During the general elections which were held in 1869, this feeling was expressed with remarkable bitterness, and in January of the following year an incident occurred which,

for a time, threatened to inaugurate a revolution. The Emperor's cousin, Prince Pierre Buonaparte, had engaged in a newspaper conflict with a socialistic journalist named Paschal Grousset. Words not being weighed, personal offence was speedily perceived in the Prince's writings, and Grousset, with his friend and coadjutor Rochefort (a marquis, but none the less a man of revolutionary ideas), decided upon bringing the Buonaparte to a duel. Grousset sent to him two gentlemen, one of whom was named Victor Noir, to demand satisfaction. In the interview which took place between these three persons at the Paris house of the Prince, the latter angrily demanded if his visitors approved of what Grousset had written, and then, losing all self-control, drew forth a revolver and shot Victor Noir, who rushed out and fell dead in the street. When this became known in the city, an indescribable fury took possession of the people; they seethed with indignation and rage, which the arrest of the Prince failed to reduce, and, but for the overwhelming armed force maintained in the capital, an open outbreak would have ensued. The ferment lasted for weeks, and the Empire and all connected with it were denounced in unmeasured terms by socialistic writers and speakers. A special court was constituted to try Prince Pierre; it acquitted him of the criminal charge, and merely fined him £1,000 as civil compensation to Noir's family. So flagrant a miscarriage of justice overwhelmed the Parisians with amazement, and many of them gave free vent to their feelings of disgust, regardless of consequences. Among those who did so was Rochefort, whose outspoken words in his journal, *La Marseillaise*, speedily procured for him incarceration in Ste. Pélagie, notwithstanding that he was a member of the Chamber of Deputies, or Corps Legislatif. Paschal Grousset shortly afterwards shared the same fate. Gustave Flourens, another of Rochefort's friends and collaborators, only escaped imprisonment by fleeing to Belgium. Many other arrests were made in connection with the affair, by means of which further manifestation of disapprobation was stifled; but it is indisputable that the failure to administer justice to the murderer of Victor Noir sensibly weakened throughout France, and more especially in its capital, the Imperial regime.

Shortly after this, several prominent Socialists plotted to

overthrow the Imperialist dynasty by force, explosives being the medium of which choice was made. The police obtained knowledge of the plot, and at once arrested the ringleaders. Among them was the afore-mentioned Protot, a young barrister; also Ferré, a law student; Cournet, a journalist; Dereure, a shoemaker; Tony Moilin, a doctor; and one Mégy. The arrest of the first-named was highly resented by the Parisian Bar, and it protested so energetically that Protot was released, and was thus able to act as counsel for the defence of Mégy, when, in July, 1870, the trial came on before the High Court of Blois. This Mégy had gained additional notoriety from the fact of having killed the officer who was sent to arrest him, on the ground that the arrest was attempted to be made at an untimely hour, in contravention of the law. His very questionable action was warmly supported by the socialistic organs in Paris, notably by *La Reveil*, a paper directed by Delescluze, who, like Blanqui, had spent his life in agitating for reforms. The prisoners in the "Complot of Bombs," as it was called, were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment, of which the longest, Mégy's, was for fifteen years.

Notwithstanding the frequency of the arrests of journalists, the suppression of newspapers, the existence of various prohibitions which limited the right of public expression of opinion, and the gross miscarriage of justice in the Victor Noir case, the Empire held a very strong position in France, which all the efforts of writers and orators seemed powerless seriously to undermine. The Emperor was not blind to the political currents of the age, and he caused the existing constitution to be amended in order that the people might be more actively and evidently represented in the work of legislation. His policy was submitted to a plébiscite in May, 1870, with the result that seven and a half millions of votes were recorded in its favour, and only one and a half millions against it; a noteworthy fact being that the adherents to the Emperor's policy were found chiefly in the rural districts, whilst its opponents predominated in the large towns.

After the record of the plébiscite was known, affairs, both domestic and foreign, in France gradually sunk to the lowest ebb of depression, and for some weeks there was not the

slightest ruffle upon the surface of events to indicate or presage important occurrences. The sinister murmurings of trouble with Prussia, which during four years had kept Frenchmen alert, had at last died away; the internal symptoms of disorder had lost their outward activity and by most people were forgotten: France was at peace with itself and with the world.

Such homely concord could not long exist in the midst of an excitable and proud people. In the early days of July, a German Prince was offered and accepted the vacant throne of Spain. France fancied by this that she would be placed between two enemies, and that her position would be imperilled. The Emperor objected to the arrangement, and desired the King of Prussia to persuade the young Prince to forego the proffered honour. The King, however, would not do this, but left the Prince to decide for himself; that decision was in accordance with the French desires. Not content with the renunciation thus obtained, France demanded of Prussia a guarantee for the future. This the King of Prussia refused to give, and sent his intimation to that effect to the French ambassador by an aide-de-camp, whereas the ambassador had expected to receive the reply personally from the King. The latter also sent word that he had no further need to receive the ambassador in connection with this subject. These messages, unpleasant though they were in substance, were courteously sent to and accepted by the ambassador; no affront was given or received.[1]

Far otherwise was it with the French nation, which gained its knowledge of the incident from unofficial and imaginative newspapers, whose accounts represented that the King of Prussia had offensively declined to receive the ambassador of France. The honour and dignity of the French people were wounded; Paris went mad with indignation at the alleged insult, and clamoured for war; the provinces followed its lead, and re-echoed the cry. It might have been the over-exacting demands of the Emperor which precipitated this crisis, but it was all France—Republican as well as Imperial—that took it up.

War was declared, and before long hundreds of thousands of

[1] *Actes*, tome i. p. 14; tome v. p. 47.

soldiers were on their way to the German frontier, determined to cross it and chastise their insolent neighbour. The Emperor headed his army in person, and chief commands were given to two of his ablest generals, Marshals Macmahon and Bazaine. The utmost enthusiasm prevailed, and jubilant hopes of winning great and speedy victories filled every breast.

The Germans were not behindhand. They arrived at the frontier as quickly as the French, and, on August 2nd, the war commenced in earnest by a French attack upon Saarbruck, a town just within Prussian territory. This place the French succeeded in occupying, and therefore the first engagement of any consequence was in their favour. Reverses were, however, at hand. Within the next few days the French were defeated at Weissenburg, at Wörth, and on the Spicheren heights, the last two being of a serious character.

The news of these defeats alarmed and infuriated Paris. It cast about for an explanation of so unexpected a contingency, and its searches led only to one man, the Emperor. It was rumoured that he had opposed the military tactics recommended by his generals; that desire for his personal safety hampered the army he was with, and it was now freely stated that he had plunged into a great war before the troops had been efficiently trained and equipped—"the Emperor" was the scapegoat.

Some practical measures were, however, taken. The city was declared in a state of siege; fresh troops were raised; the Gardes Mobiles—a body of reserves—called out; volunteer free-shooters requisitioned, and, in order to despatch as many of the regular soldiers as possible to the seat of war, sixty battalions of National Guards were enrolled, composed of capable citizens, whose duty it would be to defend the capital. The city, surrounded by an immense fortified wall, and, a mile beyond that, protected by various fortresses of great strength, was considered invulnerable. Nevertheless, more guns were mounted on the ramparts and in the forts, quantities of ammunition were stored up, the roads leading out of the city were excavated at the boundaries and drawbridges laid down. Finally, in anticipation of an actual siege, immense herds of cattle and sheep and prodigious supplies of provisions were gathered together.

To pacify the Republican party in the Legislative Chamber,

which loudly proclaimed its dissatisfaction with the existing government, the Empress Eugénie, who, in the Emperor's absence, was Regent of France, dismissed her ministers and appointed others more energetic for the purpose of making efficient preparations for carrying on the war. Count Palikao was the head of this new ministry. Subsequently, by direct warrant from the Emperor, General Trochu was appointed governor of Paris and commander-in-chief of all the forces assembled therein.

Some of the Socialists in Paris endeavoured to make capital out of their country's misfortunes by instigating a rebellious agitation, from which, at such a juncture, great results were hoped. Blanqui, the revolutionary journalist, was the prime mover in the affair, and a hundred men were engaged, at a cost of 18,000 francs,[1] to put the project into execution. It took the shape of an attack, headed by a shorthand writer and former chemist's assistant, named Emile Eudes, upon some inoffensive firemen at La Villette, in the north end of Paris. Two of the firemen were killed, one of them by Eudes' hand, and a little boy was killed inadvertently. The plan was a crude and foolish one: the attack was instantly quelled, and Eudes and others arrested. For his participation in this affray, Eudes was condemned to death; but, on the urgent requests of his friends, a delay was granted ere the sentence should be carried out.

Further news from the seat of war came into Paris by driblets. It was forbidden to publish any information other than that issuing from the Government, and this was usually of a meagre and unsatisfactory nature. The Parisians learnt seriatim and by degrees that the Emperor had divested himself of the office of commander-in-chief, and had invested Marshal Bazaine therewith; that the latter was at Metz with a total force of about 120,000 men; that the Germans were besieging Strasburg; that their foe had also attacked Bazaine at a place east of Metz, had defeated him, forced him back upon Metz, and were there surrounding him so as to cut off his retreat upon Paris; that Marshal Macmahon, at the head of 200,000 men, was manœuvring in the vicinity of Metz, waiting only to choose his

[1] *Actes*, tome i. p. 180.

own time and place to strike a blow at the German forces and relieve Bazaine. The Emperor's whereabouts became a matter of conjecture, so little did the people of Paris know the actual state of events. Rumours of victories alternated with rumours of defeats, and men knew not which to trust. Poor people for miles around the capital flocked in great numbers into the city for the better protection its walls would afford them in case the enemy came so far; on the other hand, multitudes of the wealthier classes and the entire colony of German residents fled from the place and from France.

In and beyond Paris all was warlike activity: raising of troops, manufacture of arms, warehousing provisions, drilling recruits, erecting defence works—the war was not only uppermost, but undermost also, through every thought of the French mind. Amusements, such as there were, were diverted into the same channel: one of them was somewhat noteworthy. A patriotic *café chantant* was held on September 1st, at which an old barrister and politician, a M. Crémieux, appeared. Fifty years before, when Louis XVIII. reigned over France, this Crémieux, then a young man of four-and-twenty, had defended some prisoners who were charged with singing the Marseillaise —an offence, to English ideas, devoid of criminality, but to French Royalists, and even to Napoleonic Imperialists, poignant with insult, terror, and revolutionary menace. M. Crémieux on that occasion had shown great audacity by reading in open court the words of the famous song, delivering them with such vigour that his personal acquiescence in them could not be doubted. His boldness carried the day; the prisoners were acquitted, and Crémieux' reputation as an advocate was at once established. Now, after the lapse of half a century, with the throne of France occupied by a Buonaparte who also had prohibited, until the outbreak of the war, the same song, the old barrister reproduces in full that notable pleading, and is enthusiastically applauded. It forms the event of the evening, and the theme of conversation throughout Paris the following day.

There was, however, very little show of enthusiasm or of excitement. The city as a whole was sad; it had serious work on hand, and did it; there was no inclination for gaiety, and too

much depression to permit even of the exhibition of the passion for revenge which inwardly consumed it. Laughter was heard not; for two weeks an unprecedented calmness of demeanour had characterized the Parisians. A Frenchman loves his country, and it was impossible to be light-hearted when it was threatened. No reliable news from the seat of war had arrived for some time, but the rumours of victory were seized upon with a quiet hopefulness. On the second day in September this feeling seemed to receive confirmation by the singular convolutions of a cloud, which attracted general attention. The cloud took first the shape of the letter Z, then that of a horse, finally that of the letter V, and the Parisians, despite their religious unbelief, were impregnated—like us all!—with superstition, and interpreted these signs as a heavenly token that the end of the war was near, and that victory would be theirs.[1]

[1] *Times* Paris letter, Sept. 6th, 1870.

CHAPTER II

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 4TH, 1870

"MACMAHON defeated at Sedan; his army and the Emperor taken prisoners; Bazaine unrelieved." Such was the terrible news that at last broke upon Paris and roused it from its lethargy. The battle of Sedan occurred on the 1st September, but the ministers had withheld all information until the afternoon of the 3rd, when Palikao only declared half the truth, whilst again, after midnight, he forbore to speak the whole. Yet enough was declared to render it beyond doubt that a colossal disaster had befallen France, the responsibility for which it was natural, whether just or not, to place upon the shoulders of the Government. Immediately, therefore, in the Corps Legislatif, measures were proposed for the transference into other hands of the ruling power, the actual decision being postponed until the next morning. The ill news spread rapidly; the journalists and the Internationalist chiefs both learnt it during the Saturday evening, and held meetings, separately and in conjunction, to consider the situation. Excited crowds formed in the streets late at night, and waylaid the leaders of the Parliamentary opposition, crying out to them, "Save us!" and "Deposition!"—the latter referring to the Emperor. The early hours of Sunday were reached ere these manifestants withdrew to their dwellings.

When the daylight of Sunday had fully arrived, the dread tidings were disseminated far and wide, veritably bare of subterfuge; all Parisians knew that a tremendous conquering foe was within their territory, that half of their immense army was captured, and the other half shut up in Metz. At first the streets in the capital were unusually quiet; the shopkeepers opened not their shops, and church-goers ne-

glected their sanctuaries. But there was a movement on the wing. It appeared earliest in the workmen's quarters of Montmartre and Belleville, which were always in the van of political demonstrations; then in the east, south, and even respectable west: in all districts, at about eleven o'clock, workmen and citizens began to leave their houses and workshops, and to wend their way towards the centre of the city. The men were unarmed; women and children accompanied them. After these, battalions of National Guards formed in their respective localities, headed by their officers and bands, and, with their bayonets glittering in the bright sunshine, proceeded, in marching array, also towards the centre. The armed processions become augmented on every side by numbers of people of all ranks and conditions; the main boulevards and streets leading inwards are soon full of animated and enthusiastic citizens, who, as they go, shout, "La Dechéanse" (Deposition), or sing the Marseillaise and other patriotic airs. The Place de la Concorde and the Corps Legislatif are the points to which these various crowds tend; by midday, these places and all their precincts and issues are thronged with an immense multitude. That electric emotion which is ever manifested in huge concourses of people in whom a common idea predominates, sways and unites this mass of hundreds of thousands of souls, and their one thought shall possess an irresistible impulse. It is not a part of Paris nor a class only that is here represented, but every part and every class which the city comprises. The gay costumes of women and children, the uniforms of soldiers, the coloured blouses of workmen, and the paraphernalia of military display, combined with incessant motion, ceaseless music, singing and shouting from half a million throats, make up a scene of human grandeur which is unparalleled and matchless.

And the one idea of this mighty asssemblage is to depose the Emperor. How to do it is not very evident, but circumstances are propitious, and popular movements are not troubled by manners and customs—they override them. The soldiers on whom the Emperor might have relied to defend his dynasty are afar off, on the fields of battles, past or to come. Before now, a Paris populace, less influential than this, has invaded a queen's royal apartments and has gained its will: to-day it is but an

inferior parliament house which is in view; *it* shall be invaded, and the people, who have made and unmade kings and emperors, shall settle accounts with this useless debating society, which upholds, or at least has upheld, an Emperor whom fate and infatuation have brought to ignominy and hatred.

Around the Legislative Chamber the crowd surges and presses. Its most energetic members push past the Imperial Guards placed at the entrances, and obtain access to the building. Others are passed through in small batches by friendly deputies[1] who are not averse to the threatened spoliation of the Chamber of which they form a part, in the hope that the Napoleonic idea will be also irretrievably mangled. This process of admitting the crowd soon results in the building being thronged in all its parts, even into the hall where the deputies hold their sittings.

At the moment the legislative body was adjourned, but it presently returned to resume its labours, only to find its council room invaded by a mob which respected neither places nor persons, but shouted, sung, and careered as if it had been in some drinking den. This motley and excited people demanded, in a confusion of tongues, the abdication of the Emperor—a demand which the Republican deputies had already, in a more dignified manner, placed before the Chamber, and to which the powerless assent of the latter had been given. But the deputies, for the most part, wished to effect the transference of power and change of government in the formal and stilted fashion of constitutional procedure, and they resented the forcible and disorderly entrance of the people into their place of assembly. Even the Republican leaders, who were otherwise in accord with the invaders, protested against the latter's conduct; but it was all in vain; the people were there, and were sovereign: constitutional procedure was once again tossed adrift on the ocean of popular clamour. Léon Gambetta, one of the Republican deputies, brought forth from the chaos a practical issue by declaring the Napoleonic dynasty at an end, and stating that he, Jules Favre, and coadjutors, were going to the Hôtel

[1] *Actes*, tome i. p. 181.

de Ville, there to proclaim the Republic and to form a new Government.[1]

The Hôtel de Ville! Seat of all revolutionary governments in France; headquarters of the municipality of Paris, and a visible emblem of the people's past and present power! Away, then, to the Hôtel de Ville, through the living masses which throng the quays on both sides of the river! Gambetta and another Republican leader, Picard, are escorted thither, and half carried by an enthusiastic crowd; Favre, full of emotion, proceeds independently. At the first bridge, *en route*, Favre encounters the military governor, General Trochu, on horseback, and tells him that the Legislative Chamber is invaded, and that he is on the way to the Hôtel de Ville to prevent the demagogues seizing the reins of power: an event, in his opinion, which would only add to the ruin and disasters of the nation. In the accomplishment of this purpose, Favre foresees that Trochu's military assistance may become necessary, and, in fact, invaluable; therefore he requests the general to return to the Louvre—from whence he had come—and there await some message from him.[2] Trochu, Royalist, Imperialist, anything but Republican, sworn to defend the Emperor, tacitly throws over, at a stroke, oath and allegiance, and assents to the course suggested by Favre, though he makes a formal reservation of his liberty of action in order to satisfy the punctiliousness of a hesitating mind.

Meanwhile, the news of the declaration of the Emperor's deposition has been carried to the Empress, who, from the windows of the Tuileries Palace, has witnessed the immense throng of people with alarm. The demonstration is fraught with danger, not only to the Imperial dynasty, but, alas! to the persons who form it, though, happily, the Empress has thus far been forgotten by the populace. She is, however, besought by faithful attendants to quit France at once; ere the afternoon is gone, she is safely taken out of Paris, and, in the course of a few hours, conveyed to England.

Jules Favre, after parting from Trochu, pursued his way to the Hôtel de Ville, which edifice had already been taken

[1] *Actes*, t. i. p. 183. [2] *Ibid.*, t. i. p. 185.

possession of by multitudes of people, and treated in like fashion to the Corps Legislatif. Every room, hall, and corridor was filled with a babbling and gesticulating throng; amateur orators seized the occasion to indulge in grandiloquent language, whilst National Guards and others employed themselves in wrecking everything that was suggestive of Imperialism, for which pursuit plentiful provision existed amongst the furnishings and documents of the palace. The Emperor's portrait hung on one of the walls: with especial zest it was stabbed in the vital parts prior to being utterly destroyed. The plébiscite tickets taken in May, representing the seven and a half millions of votes in favour of the Imperial policy, were seized and scattered to the winds. The demolition or disfigurement of the decorations and effects was as senseless as it was extensive; but the human intellect is at times intensely engrossed when it can destroy aught which it has not made and does not prize, and its love of change overleaps considerations either of expense or of consequences.

It was three o'clock when Jules Favre, Gambetta, Picard, and other Republican deputies arrived at the Hôtel de Ville. After haranguing the crowd, they withdrew to arrange who should be members of the new Government, which they never questioned should be formed from amongst themselves. The Socialists and revolutionary agitators, who had all participated in the events of the day, and were also now at the Hôtel de Ville, thought they had a right to be included in the new power. Delescluze, for instance, Millière and Félix Pyat, men in whom the common people put their faith, had they not a claim to office? Jules Favre thought not, and the decision virtually lay with him, for he enjoyed at the moment a great popularity, and the public swayed around his name.[1] By force of this, by his age (61), by his oratorical ability, and, not least, by the estimation in which he held himself, he appeared marked out to fill the chief position—that of President—in the new Government. This office, together with that of Minister of Foreign Affairs, Favre accordingly allocated to himself; Gambetta, Picard, Emmanuel Arago, and other Republican leaders, were provided

[1] *Actes*, t. i. p. 188.

with various departments and places. Etienne Arago, uncle of the last-named, was acclaimed "Mayor of Paris" by the populace on his arrival at the Hôtel de Ville; this nomination was duly confirmed by the nephew on behalf of the new rulers.

Another arrival on the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, greeted with similar cries of "Mayor of Paris," and with even greater enthusiasm than the preceding, was the Socialist marquis, Rochefort, who had been imprisoned some months before. Rochefort's release was the first action of the new Government —effected, even before the latter was completely formed, by an order to the governor of the prison Ste. Pélagie to release all political prisoners: an order which was immediately complied with, the governor thus exhibiting that remarkable adaptability to revolutionary requirements which seems to be a characteristic of the French official mind.

When the cries of "Mayor of Paris" resounded flatteringly around him, Rochefort was made aware that that functionary had already been appointed, and he magnanimously declined to interfere therewith. Favre was disquieted at the warm reception accorded to Rochefort, whose assistance he would rather have been without. The popular will, however, must be acknowledged; moreover, Rochefort was effusively welcomed by Jules Ferry and Floquet,[1] who had just been appointed minister and deputy mayor respectively. These two desired Rochefort's inclusion in the Government, and a place had therefore to be found for him.

A greater difficulty than this beset the Government in the question: "How to enforce their authority?" They were self-installed rulers, and the populace was fickle: agreeing with them to-day, it might disagree to-morrow. The troops and National Guards had never been under their control: what if they refused to obey their commands? A Government cannot rule by moral suasion alone. This dilemma had been foreseen by Favre when he spoke to Trochu a couple of hours before, and it was from Trochu that the delivery from it must come. As swiftly as was possible the general was sent for and

[1] *Actes*, t. i. p. 189.

presently appeared at the Hôtel de Ville; he consented to form part of the Government, but insisted upon being its President, so that the army might be safely brought over to the new power.[1] Trochu was clearly indispensable, and his demand was consequently assented to—with which agreement the Government may fairly be said to have become constituted.[2] It took the name of "Government of the National Defence"—a name suggested by a little, old politician, statesman, and author of European reputation, M. Thiers, and adopted because it reflected no political views, and was therefore not liable to estrange any particular party.

This man Thiers had been a minister under Louis Philippe; to him largely was due the erection of the fortifications surrounding Paris. Originally Orléanist, he had become a Republican of moderate views, and in the course of his long, varied, and responsible career he had given expression to two phrases which, for good or evil, clung to his name: "The Republic is the form of Government which divides France the least," and on a memorable occasion he had stigmatised the people as "a vile multitude." Thiers was the only man of the Republican party who had had great official and diplomatic experience; his intelligence and stability of character were unquestioned, and he might, if he had cared, have been at the head of this new Government; he had even been offered, two days before, by the Empress Eugénie, the reins of power:[3] both overtures were declined. He anticipated even worse calamities befalling France, and he refused to embroil himself in responsibility for future events at so critical a juncture. This can only be regarded as an unpatriotic action, dictated by a too jealous concern for his reputation. He, however, gave the new rulers his good will.

As for the Government, it is impossible not to see that it has been blown together by a whirlwind of popular enthusiasm, such

[1] *Actes*, t. i. p. 186.

[2] The members of the Government were: General Trochu, Jules Favre, Jules Ferry, Jules Simon, Emmanuel Arago, Gambetta, Crémieux, Garnier-Pagès, Picard, Glais-Bizoin, Pelletan, and Rochefort. Other recipients of prominent positions were MM. Etienne Arago, Dorian, Magnin, Jules Grévy, etc.; the entire number, with the exception of Trochu, being Republican politicians.

[3] *Actes*, t. i. p. 178.

as gathers indiscriminately in its bosom the most mutually repellent particles, and sweeps them on for an instant in unison. How far these individuals will travel homogeneously, time alone can tell. They do not know yet whether they have one impulse in common; there is no doubt they have many at variance. Juxtapose only the head and tail of this power, and note the contradictory elements in each and between them: Trochu, Orléanist at heart, Imperialist by profession until this day, become a political chief without a name, yet withal of decided conservative instincts; and Rochefort, socialist and revolutionary to the backbone, who all his life has kicked against authority, and is now jerked into the necessity of upholding it. Between these extremes, multifarious views, untried, unknown; a form of government which is neither personal nor constitutional, which is in fact no one knows what, except for its ostensible purpose of defence, and to what it may turn it is equally impossible to say. Even the socialistic Utopia of a Commune is in the thoughts of some of them—Rochefort already has suggested it, whilst the mayor, Etienne Arago, has taken it for granted that this new Government is the Commune,[1] and has to be disabused of the idea by his superiors.

Untroubled by any misgivings as to the concordance or utility of the work of its hands, the people of Paris felt and exhibited only intense satisfaction when it was established beyond dispute that the Napoleonic dynasty had fallen, and that a new Government was constituted. All the evening, and far into Monday morning, crowds, overflowing with uncontrollable joy, patrolled the streets and filled the boulevards; they sang the Marseillaise or shouted out patriotic exhortations with noisy exuberance. Imperial eagles, or insignia over shops and in public places, were pulled down and destroyed; soldiers had the Imperial emblems torn from their uniforms, whilst the hated gendarmes — the police — were molested wherever seen. In their mad frenzy men would passionately embrace each other, or commence to dance; then, as insane people do, would suddenly relapse into a state of perfect quietude and self-control, making a singular contrast to the effervescence of the previous

[1] *Actes*, t. i. p. 62.

moment.[1] Thus the wild hilarity went on, and the most momentous fact of all—was forgotten. The war, their defeated army and their imprisoned army, the mighty foe invading their native land, the thousands of fellow-countrymen that lay dead on the grim fields of battle, the greater thousands that were wounded, suffering untold agonies: all these things were forgotten, and, for that day at least, not a hand's turn was taken towards mitigating such tremendous disasters.

[1] *Times* correspondent.

CHAPTER III

SEPTEMBER 5TH TO 18TH, 1870

THE order to release the political prisoners from Ste. Pélagie was speedily followed by a general amnesty for political offenders. It was convenient to the Government of the National Defence to consider that the offences thus wiped out had been directed only against the Imperial regime, and, as the new authority owed its existence to the disrepute into which the old had fallen, it could do no other than release the agitators and revolutionists who had been imprisoned under the Empire, and whom the working classes looked upon with admiration and approval. The amnesty also restored to French exiles the liberty to return to their native soil; the bulk of these at once availed themselves of the privilege. Amongst exiles and prisoners thus repossessed of freedom, and who on September the 5th or 6th were again found in Paris in the full exercise of their liberty, were, in addition to Rochefort, Gustave Flourens; Cluseret, the naturalized American; Eudes, whose sentence of death was thus almost miraculously annulled; Delescluze, Grousset, and Vermorel, journalists; Ferré, Tony Moilin, and Mégy, with the other personages who had been sentenced by the High Court of Blois for participation in the complot of bombs.

The restoration to political activity of these Socialists, and of many other persons who were either Socialists or advanced Republicans, was undoubtedly regarded as a sop thrown to the extreme party, to quieten their ambitions and reconcile them to their exclusion from high office in the Government. The measure had, however, an effect the reverse of this. The Socialist leaders admittedly had had much to do with the revulsion of feeling that had recently grown up against the

deposed Emperor, though the culmination of that antipathy was due entirely to the lamentable defeats sustained by the French army. They thought they had a claim to official recognition and responsibility, that they alone could effectually represent the immense artisan population of the country, and that a Government without them would fail to secure confidence or to exhibit energy. They had, however, been ignored by the men now in power, and of their party only Rochefort—and he of aristocratic birth—had been included in the Government. Of working men, or their class leaders, there were none, and to this exclusion the latter, far from being pacified by gaol deliveries and repatriations, determined not to submit. Rochefort, member of the Government though he was, assisted and guided this discontent, fearful lest his Governmental colleagues should turn out too conservative, and averse to the ideal Republic—or Commune—which he and the Socialists wished to set up. Side by side with the Government, Rochefort, Flourens, and others of the extreme section, consulted together on the measures to be taken to exercise supervision over and influence upon it. This was on the Monday, the first day after the inauguration of the new regime.[1]

Earlier even than this, the International Association had given evidence of its want of confidence in the Government. On Sunday midnight it sent a delegation to the Hôtel de Ville to declare its magnanimous intention not to attack the new power for the present, and to claim urgency for the adoption of various measures which, according to it, were of paramount importance. These measures included demands for municipal elections throughout Paris, abolition of all restrictions upon the press and public meeting, an elective magistracy, and suppression of the prefecture of police.[2] These views were, after some delay, laid before Gambetta, the Minister of the Interior, who informed the deputation that many of the restrictions placed by the Imperial authorities upon the press would be removed; as to the other matters, they were grave questions which the Government had not the right to entrench upon.[3] With this

[1] *Le dix-huit Mars*, p. 90.
[2] Lefrançais, p. 64. *Actes*, t. i. p. 192.
[3] Lefrançais, p. 64.

reply the Internationalists had to come away, but they were far from being satisfied.

The dissatisfaction of the Internationalists, whose leading spirits were Varlin, Lefrançais, and Tridon, and of the revolutionary journalists (Jacobins) represented by Rochefort, Blanqui, and Delescluze, soon took active form. In each of the twenty arrondissements, or districts into which the city of Paris is administratively divided, these malcontents immediately organized public meetings, at which delegates, elected by acclamation were designated to form Committees of Vigilance, which should collect information in and make suggestions concerning the defence of their respective localities. From the twenty committees thus constituted a Central Committee was drawn, composed of four delegates from each committee, eighty in all. Here at once, it was contended, was a body—representative of Parisian workmen and of every district in the capital—which should direct and control the Government by the simple process of assembling and passing resolutions, which latter it thought the Government would not dare to ignore.

This Central Committee located itself at the head-quarters of the International Association, Place de la Corderie du Temple, though it professed to be, and was, a distinct organization, in the sense of holding separate meetings and having no official intercourse with its co-locataire; furthermore, many of its members were neither workmen nor Internationalists. On the other hand, a goodly number of persons were members of both bodies,[1] and by means of these it was easy to establish an unofficial, though none the less effective, accord and intercommunication. The aims of the two bodies were similar, though the Central Committee was more openly political than the International Association. Both bodies were actively supported by the socialistic newspapers, and possessed amongst the working-class population a considerable influence.

The Committees of Vigilance in the arrondissements were not slow to test the extent of their power. They attached themselves to the various mairies (district municipal offices) to

[1] For instance, the following: Lefrançais, Pindy, Malon, Vaillant, Demay, Longuet, Oudet, Johannard, Clémence, E. Gérardin, Babick, Beslay, Theisz, Duval, Avrial, Dereure, Frankel, Langevin, Trinquet, Serailler, Varlin.

which Republican mayors, in the place of the dispossessed Imperialist ones, had just been appointed by Etienne Arago; they interfered with the discharge of the local administrative functions, and arrogated to themselves an authority equal to that of the mayors, whose orders were in fact frequently overruled or rendered inoperative by them.

An individual action of a similar nature had taken place on the eventful 4th, and had been tolerated by the Government. This was the self-installation, at the Prefecture of Police, of a young law student named Raoul Rigault, as head of one of the departments in that establishment. Rigault—Socialist, Jacobin, Hebertist, sometime prisoner—was a man of reckless and defiant disposition, and the Government permitted the self-appointed official to stay, lest his removal should sharpen a sword for use against themselves.

Such proceedings would have been impossible under any regular or firm authority, but the new rulers had scarcely greater claim to office than Rigault or the Vigilance Committees, and they soon showed a lack of that firmness which the circumstances of the hour demanded.

The Government however, at the outset, was little perturbed by the irregularity of its position. With unblushing effrontery it had taken upon itself tremendous responsibilities, as though it had been fitted by Heaven to discharge them. It sent out grandiose proclamations announcing to all France and the Continent the change of regime which had occurred, and expressive of its foreknowledge of the immense influence which that change would exercise upon the prosecution of the war. It glorified the indomitable prowess of the French soldiers and people, and declared the fixed determination of the entire country—as emphatically stated by M. Jules Favre—not to cede one inch of territory nor one stone of their forts to the enemy. The French unanimity on this point was so striking, and the language employed by all parties was so strong and confident, that, had their enemy been of a similar temperament to themselves, he would have perceived the futility of further fighting, and would have at once departed to his own land.

Notwithstanding, however, the truculent and defiant attitude

of the Government—despite the imperative mandate, constituted by the overthrowal of the Empire and the unanimous wish of France, that the war should be carried on with the utmost vigour and that it should end only in a crushing victory over their foe, the amazing fact remains that not one of the members of the Government of the National Defence, from the first day of their official existence, believed in the possibility of successfully defending Paris.[1] The full significance of this will be realized when it is stated that to surrender the capital would at any time be tantamount to a total defeat. Neither was the preservation of their country's integrity a thing which they hoped to secure.[2] Self-appointed defenders of their patrie, sustained by the nation only because they promised victory, they had already decided that defeat was inevitable, and they therefore possessed not the slightest moral or legal right to rule over France. Honourable men would at once have made known their opinions and have resigned their offices, but these dishonourable personages clung like leeches to their newly found positions, they deceived the people as to their real views, they foisted on the public high-sounding declarations of the certain victory which awaited their armies, and made ostentatious preparations for prosecuting the war and strengthening Paris; and yet all the while in private conclave they meditated upon the best means of reducing the warlike enthusiasm of the capital, and of accustoming the minds of its citizens by easy gradations to the thought of that capitulation which alone was the certainty they foresaw. Such astounding duplicity was not without its causes. Love of power, hatred of the Empire, and desire to re-establish a Republic—these were the active principles which led the members of the Government, Trochu excepted, to embark upon such a culpable career. Trochu, accustomed to the exercise of power, neither inordinately hating the Empire nor ardently desiring a Republic, might have been considered the one strong man who would have frustrated such political machinations; but, alas, he also loved power and was ambitious, and his strength of will lay rather in declamation than in deed. The French people—and particularly that part of

[1] *Actes*, t. i. p. 202. [2] *Ibid.*, t. i. p. 63. Séance du soir du 5 Sept.

it that was encompassed within the walls of Paris—anxious to repel the invader, and drawing back not from any sacrifice that would serve to help this object, had no suspicion of the Government's insincerity; itself believing in the successful prosecution of the war, it believed the lying braggadocio which emanated from those to whom it looked for guidance and in whose honour it trusted.

The near proximity of a siege could not longer be doubted by the denizens of the capital, for the victorious German was marching straight towards them, and in anticipation of his coming the Government adopted various precautionary measures. Of these were the despatch of a delegate Government[1] to Tours to carry on the administration of the country and raise war levies when Paris should be blocked by the foe; the storing up of huge quantities of provisions and wines; the strengthening of the forts and ramparts; and the erection of barricades within the city walls, so as to form a third line of defence should by any means the first two be surmounted. The imminence of a siege caused the exodus of all persons who could afford to leave the city, and the entrance of thousands of country people who came in for refuge; wearied and wounded soldiers from the great battle-fields on the frontier also arrived daily to seek asylum within the capital.

The defence of the city was further strengthened by the creation of sixty additional battalions of National Guards, nominally of 1,500 men each. The thousands of citizens thus abstracted from their ordinary avocations, added to the 90,000 National Guards created a month previously, completely broke up the usual trade and industries of Paris, and rendered it wholly given over to military purposes. This fact was so evident, and apparently so necessary, that it became incumbent upon the Government to issue a decree suspending all legal actions and appeals, for, under existing conditions, it was impossible to keep commercial engagements or to pay debts.

Thus the Government went on with their mockery of defence, and at the same time they prosecuted, with something like sincerity, the political operations on which their minds were

[1] Composed of MM. Crémieux, Glais-Bizoin, and Fourichon.

bent. The substitution in Paris of Republican for Imperialist mayors has been adverted to; a similar change of prefects throughout the country was also made. The police force which had done service under the Empire was withdrawn at Paris and elsewhere, and a patrol of National Guards charged with the duty of preserving the peace. Everything reminiscent of the late regime was destroyed or banished. Amidst the enthusiasm and the rage which had been manifested on the 4th, the tearing down of Imperialist emblems and the renaming of streets might be overlooked as a passing humour; but, when the substantial punishment of deposition inflicted upon the Emperor had become an uncontested fact, it was puerile and contemptible to continue the indulgence of such petty and useless animosities; nevertheless, the Government took the lead in perpetuating these unmanly proceedings. A statue of Napoleon I., which stood at the round point of Neuilly, was pulled down by order of the Mayor of Paris, Etienne Arago; the renaming of streets continued; postage stamps were withdrawn because of the Imperial head upon them; the private correspondence of the Imperial family was seized at Dieppe and returned to Paris, where it was overhauled by curious political scandal-mongers; generally, whatever could be done to cover with obloquy the late ruler and his house was done. The National Guards assisted zealously in these performances, and caught the pusillanimous and intolerant spirit of their superiors. When, as was speedily the case, there were no more Imperial relics or insignia to destroy, the citizen Guards turned their attentions to anything or anybody that they thought of suspicious appearance, and straightway secured it, or, if a person, arrested him. In one instance a party of Guards arrested their officer, because he had given utterance to some political sentiment with which they did not agree; the result of this was that the officer was dismissed from his post, and the manifest insubordination of the men openly approved.

This was but one indication among multitudes of the erratic and domineering spirit that animated the citizen soldiers. It was they—the people!—that had set up the Government and who upheld it; in fact, as in theory, they were its masters. In a thousand ways they contested its orders and refused obedience,

and the Government could only protest uselessly or pretend not to see the affront. The city was full of National Guards, and they were all much alike in indiscipline. The profession of soldier took the Parisian's fancy: to carry a gun, be absolved from work, and have a pittance provided for him—was it not glorious? Yea, and they were determined not to divest the profession of its pleasant features by a too vigorous obedience to Governmental behests. Their officers were like-minded to themselves, chosen by them, removable by them—in their power completely. The officers, however, did not object to this, for if it were agreeable to be in the rank and file, it was doubly so to wear the badges or stripes of commandant. Officers multiplied in excess of battalions; they nominated themselves, trusting to chance to enrol men subsequently; thus it happened that orders were freely given out to arm battalions which had no existence![1]

Officers were not more amenable to control than the men; two of them, Cluseret and Lullier—both having formerly served in the regular forces—even came under the notice of the Prefect of Police, who was, however, powerless to remedy defects which had their origin in higher places. Another officer was the journalist Flourens, who persisted in calling himself a colonel, though there was not such a grade in the National Guards. Midst officers and men of this description, agitation was rank; meetings were held at which the conduct of the Government was unrestrainedly criticised; committees were formed, presumably for furthering in various ways the defence, but, like the Committees of Vigilance, which were nominally civil, these military committees arrogated to themselves many functions to which they had no real claim, and were provocative of additional confusion and disorder in the already chaotic state of Parisian society. Universal suffrage and the equality of men were in practical existence; authority was a nominal factor, only effective when the wishes of the nominally inferior being happened to coincide with those of his nominal superior.

From amongst the babbling conflict of opinion, suggestion, orders and commands that speedily arose in every quarter of

[1] *Actes*, t. i. p. 199.

Paris, the recommendations of the Central Committee of the twenty arrondissements may be singled out, as emanating from a body of some general influence, and further, as a public evidence, to those who cared to note the fact, that such Committee was actually formed and had begun its operations. It was on the 16th September that the first manifesto of this Committee was placarded on the walls and hoardings of Paris;[1] it contained demands for the various measures which the International Association had laid before the Government on the 5th, and, in addition, for the municipalization of all food and liquors within Paris, in view of the siege, and the apportionment of equal rations to each person by the authorities; for the completion of the armament of the National Guards, and for various military measures relative to Paris, even to the employment by women and children of explosive engines: "Republican Paris being resolved, rather than surrender, to bury itself under its ruins."

To these demands publicly addressed to it—to the less public but even more pertinacious requests and advice tendered to it by a heterogeneous multitude of counsellors, what could the Government do? Anxious chiefly to prolong its young life, it had no thought of resigning; to take the people into its confidence, it dared not; to act with decision and vigour against indisciplinary elements was beyond its intellectual range; to make up its mind to a clear, precise, and patriotic course of action, it could not—there remained but to let things drift, and to trust, Trochu, to God, and the rest to fate or fortune, to get them out of the mire wherein they had landed themselves. This hesitating, deceitful, and weak-kneed Government temporised with malcontents, made pretences occasionally to check

[1] Signed by forty-seven members, fourteen of whom were Cluseret, Demay, Johannard, Lefrançais, Longuet, Millière, Malon, E. Oudet, Pindy, Ranvier, Vaillant, Jules Vallès, Genton, Gaillard. (*Lefrançais*, p. 73.)

According to Malon, the signatories were thirty-two in number, and included the following: Avrial, Beslay, Chardon, Demay, Duval, Dereure, Frankel, Ferré, Flourens, Johannard, Lefrançais, Langevin, Longuet, Malon, Oudet, Pottier, Pindy, Ranvier, Régère, Rigault, Serailler, Tridon, Theisz, Trinquet, Vaillant, Varlin, Vallès. (Malon, *Troisième défaite du prolétariat français*, p. 41, quoted in *Actes*, t. i. p. 193.)

disorder and repress agitation, ignored what it was inconvenient to see, and flattered the populace with laudations and misled it by military operations of the shallowest description.

For energetic and thoroughgoing fighting there was now abundant need and opportunity. The enemy was already in the vicinity of the capital, and Paris was shut in upon herself, for a few days only partially, but presently to be absolute. The approach of the Germans was necessarily in a scattered and piecemeal form, yet no strenuous endeavour was made to defeat them as they arrived—rather it was thought that they would defeat themselves through famine. Paris had food supplies for two months; the invader, in a hostile country, hundreds of miles from his native land, could never get sufficient edibles to feed a huge army for so long a period! Nursing its own indolence and insincerity by this comforting reflection, the Government, instead of trying its utmost to repel the Germans ere they had amassed their full strength around the city, barely did what it could to save appearances and to lull the Parisians into a sense of safety by repeated declarations of the impregnability of their ramparts. Yet General Trochu had a quarter of a million regular and reserve troops in Paris, and an equal number of National Guards; with half a million men something might have been done.

CHAPTER IV

SEPTEMBER 19TH TO THE 31ST OCTOBER, 1870

THE lack of straightforwardness, vigour, and unity which characterized the Government greatly added to the difficulties of a position which, even to a robust and healthy authority, would have proved of enormous perplexity. Open enemies encompassed the outskirts of the city and isolated it from the world; within, unconcealed opposition, partly patriotic, very largely factious, arose from a hundred sources. The anomalous origin of the Government now began to produce additional inconvenience to it; it could not claim to represent, by any indisputable evidence, even Paris, much less France, and it had too many opponents in the capital not to be continually reminded of the fact. To put an end to the anomaly, by convoking a National Constituent Assembly, which should either maintain the Government in its self-elected position or appoint another to supersede it, was a laudable desire entertained by some of its members, but one which could not be realized whilst the capital and a great portion of the country were beset by a huge attacking army, paralysing every action other than military. If national elections were to be possible, it was essential that hostilities should cease, at least for a while.

Animated by the hope of arranging a truce with the enemy, and ambitious to score a little personal triumph, M. Jules Favre, secretly and alone, set out from Paris to discover the great Prussian Chancellor, Count Bismarck, whom he knew to be somewhere amongst the forces surrounding the capital. It was not a very difficult task to discover so important a person, and Favre obtained the interview he sought, and was also granted, in principle, the object he had at heart—an armistice, but on condition that the town of Strasburg—still being besieged—should be handed over to the besiegers and its garrison surrendered as

prisoners of war. Favre wept; his patriotic impulses were outraged by such a stipulation, which he declined to entertain for a moment; the negotiation was broken off, and he returned to Paris. There being no armistice, there could be no elections, and the Government of the National Defence could not escape from the irregular position into which it had so glibly rushed without counting the cost.

Closely connected with the Governmental situation was the question of a municipal council for Paris, the agitation for which became daily more pronounced. This subject constituted another serious dilemma for the Government, for the demand, in the abstract, was just, and it was impossible to demonstrate any paramount inexpediency which it involved. The truth lay in the fact that an elected Council or Commune would occupy a stronger, because legal, position than the Government, and therefore, instead of being an inferior and local authority, it would be the superior, and would certainly claim to direct, not only the municipal affairs of the capital, but the national administration of France, and would thus become the real Government of the country. This was not an imaginary outlook. The Socialists and Revolutionists who agitated for a Commune advocated for it ever-widening powers and responsibilities veiled under municipal terms and patriotic appeals, but which clearly indicated the extreme lengths to which they would go, if their first demands were conceded. Manifestations for this and various other projects included in the Socialistic programme became of daily occurrence. They were inaugurated chiefly by a small clique of journalists—Delescluze, Blanqui, Flourens, Pyat, Millière, Vermorel, Vallès, with others, whose efforts, naturally, were lauded and supported by their respective newspapers and also by the International Association of Workers and the Central Committee of the twenty arrondissements.[1]

All these leaders of revolutionary opinion, and almost every man whose loquacity with tongue or pen had procured him the applause of the working classes, had been elected officers of the National Guard; thus it roughly followed that a Socialist officer

[1] *Actes*, t. i. p. 201.

commanded Socialist men. This community of thought frequently resulted in entire battalions of Guards publicly manifesting their political opinions; the officers, whose duty would properly have led them to repress and forbid any demonstration, acting openly in concert with their men, sometimes being the instigators of these proceedings and at other times following the evident wish of their subordinates. The battalions of National Guards most notorious for demonstrating in front of the Hôtel de Ville were those commanded by the journalist Gustave Flourens, who was a man of excitable disposition, extremely ambitious, not devoid of intelligence, but lacking, in a remarkable degree, sobriety of thought. He still dubbed himself "Colonel," and the Government, though alive to the absurdity of Flourens' claim, after refusing to bestow that particular rank upon him, conciliated him with the unique title of "major de rempart," with which Flourens' vanity had to be content.

Flourens was in other ways troublesome to the Government. He and his battalions demonstrated once again before the Hôtel de Ville on the 3rd October, renewing demands for the municipal elections, and for a *levée en masse* with which to repel the enemy. These requests were bluntly refused, and Flourens departed with his men to nourish fresh plans for compelling or inducing the Government to comply with his wishes.

The Central Committee of the twenty arrondissements came to his aid, and by it an imposing demonstration was fixed to take place on the 8th October.[1] The commandants of the National Guards, who were in sympathy with the Committee and Flourens, had intended to participate in the manifestation; but a misunderstanding occurred in regard to its date, and they did not put in an appearance. Flourens, however, with about seven thousand men, arrived before the Hôtel de Ville, and was received in audience by the entire personnel of the Government, to whom he set forth the aforesaid demands. With striking unanimity and firmness the Government again refused to grant the requests, and Flourens was sharply reproved for encouraging indiscipline by his proceedings—a reproach

[1] *Actes*, t. i. p. 201.

so well merited and accurate that several of the officers who accompanied him signified their assent to it. Indiscipline might cause the eventual defeat of their armies; this, however, was not the greatest calamity in the eyes of the Government that it might be productive of. The truth was ingenuously unfolded by Floquet, one of the deputy mayors, who, in the presence of the Government, said to Flourens, "You lose the Republic; we founded it the 4th September; it will perish by your hand."[1] Yea, the establishment of the Republic was, to these rulers, of more account than the nation's honour and safety. Flourens was discredited and displeased; petulantly he departed, and subsequently sent in his resignation, thinking to have it refused, as had been done on previous occasions. This time, however, it was accepted, though Flourens' deprival of officership was, like so many other things at that epoch, purely nominal; the hotheaded and enthusiastic Belleville commandant still revelled in his title of "major de rempart," and conserved in every material way the control of his battalions.

From these Socialistic manifestations and their practical futility one fact becomes evident: that the malcontents, despite their ostentatious proceedings, their public meetings, and press polemics, over-estimated their strength. The Government, whatever might be its faults, was still trusted by the bulk of the people. The Socialists, by fomenting agitation and promoting disunion when the greatest unity was needed, made enemies where they might have found adherents, and even alienated some of their avowed disciples. These lessons were lost upon them; instead of abandoning denunciation of the Government, they accentuated and embittered it, and laid plans for more effectual opposition in the future.

Unfortunately for the Government and for France, the dissatisfaction of the Socialists with their rulers had a basis more solid than that afforded by their own political aspirations. The fortune of war was still going against the French; defeat followed defeat—on several occasions around Paris; at Strasburg, which had finally capitulated on September 27th, after a heroic defence lasting six weeks; at Athenay, on the 10th October;

[1] *Actes*, t. i. p. 201.

at Soissons, which capitulated on the 16th October. The most serious of these losses could not by any reasonable person be attributed to any wilful negligence of the central Government at Paris, nevertheless it had to bear the brunt of them. It was more responsible for the various defeats sustained in the vicinity of the capital, for it failed to put forth its strength as it might have done. Trochu lacked confidence in his troops; the National Guards especially were indisciplinary, inefficient, and unreliable; even the mobiles and regulars answered not to the full military standard in drill and manœuvring. To Trochu himself must be apportioned much of the blame for a continuance of this state of things. He was half-hearted in his efforts to remedy defects, temporising, vacillating, and spiritless. Personally of undoubted courage, he lacked all the qualities that were needed at such a time to render him a worthy commander of men. The troops, designated for the most part to comparative inaction, to exercises and evolutions which seemed at once endless and useless, became disaffected, and encouraged in their disregard of orders; confidence in their officers and leaders began to wane, whilst the lack of energy and firmness shown by the Government produced a corresponding incohesion and powerlessness betwixt the various fighting units which made up the immense army in and around Paris.

In marked contrast with this was the state of the German forces opposed to them. These exhibited the highest development of modern military training and intelligent direction. Their lines of investment were sixty miles in circumference, and, necessarily, extremely shallow at any given point. The weakness and inconvenience resulting from this was, however, speedily obliterated by means of the telegraph wire, which connected every post along the huge circle of investment with the German staff headquarters at Versailles. Fighting occurring at any spot became immediately known to Count von Moltke, the Prussian commander, and reinforcements were despatched whenever necessary. The German troops were, moreover, models of discipline, courage, and endurance; they were buoyant with the knowledge of an almost unbroken succession of victories, and had, with justice, the utmost confidence in the ability of their great strategist and his staff. The phy-

sical obstacles attached to the besieging of so large a city as Paris, by so great an army, were overcome with steady and business-like application, and the arrangements made were based upon the assumption—which the French had lightly dismissed as impossible—that the siege would last a considerable time.

Paris was completely deprived of ordinary means of communication with the outside world. News, however, still went in and out, in an erratic and unreliable fashion, by the aid of balloons and carrier pigeons, whilst many ingenious contrivances were invented to minimise, as far as possible, the compulsory isolation which had befallen the city. Among the balloon ascents the most notable was that on October 7th, when Gambetta, the Minister of the Interior, left Paris to take up at Tours the duties of Minister of War. The reverses in the provinces had been attributed to lack of energy in the delegate Government, which was comprised of old and unimpassioned men. Gambetta was young, eloquent, overflowing with patriotic zeal and fire: he would organize and inspire the national resistance to their foe. Thus did the Government continue the incitement to the people to rise quivering to expel the invader—being, nevertheless, hopeless of success.

Another balloon departure from Paris was that of Count Kératry, until then Prefect of Police, who had angrily quitted the councils of the Government because of its indecision and incapacity to cope with the disorderly elements existing in the capital.[1] Of these disorderly ones, perhaps the most pronounced, within Kératry's jurisdiction, was Cluseret; but the Government refused to sanction his arrest. However, after Kératry's departure, Cluseret also quitted Paris—not by balloon, but on foot, crossing unperceived the Prussian lines, by a good fortune which befell scarcely any other individual. He made his way to the south of France, where he presently became General-in-Chief of the National Guard of Marseilles.[2] To the office vacated by Kératry, M. Edmond Adam was appointed.

Shortly after these departures, General Trochu unfolded to the beleaguered citizens of the capital a plan which he had formed for freeing them from their thraldom. Though remark-

[1] *Actes*, t. i. p. 210. [2] *Ibid.*

able for nothing but commonplace simplicity, this plan, when first promulgated, was much talked about and admired. It consisted in the French provincial armies marching on Paris on a pre-arranged day and attacking its besiegers from the outside, whilst Trochu with his entire force should attack them from the inside; thus taking the enemy, vulgarly speaking, between two fires, and doubtless making short work of him. A simple plan, effective enough in theory; the Parisians delighted for a while in magnifying and extolling it. Nevertheless, the inertia they were reduced to whilst their provincial army should be gathered together and their metropolitan one perfected, coupled with the unbroken rumours of reverses sustained here and there, sorely tried their faith in Trochu, and the infractions of discipline were not less frequent after than before the announcement of the "plan." Riotous conduct even occurred, and called for restrictive measures. A court-martial was instituted for the summary trial and punishment of offenders, and various portions of the National Guard were transferred to other localities than their own. Despite which, discontent grew apace; the people saw only the broad fact that, after a month's siege, nothing had been accomplished, and the enemy held them in a tighter grip than ever. General Trochu reproved their impatience—referred to the enthusiasm with which, in July, the war had begun, and to the disasters which had followed from the real unpreparedness of the troops to engage in a great conflict. He urged the Parisians to wait until the right moment had arrived for making an effective onslaught upon their foe.

This presumably prudent but utterly unsatisfactory advice left the citizens in the same discontented, querulous state; their resentment was somewhat smothered, but was even more dangerous than when openly expressed. There was absolutely not one reassuring feature of a practical description in the existing situation. Even such comfortless condition tended to become aggravated. On October 26th, disquieting rumours prevailed regarding the safety of Metz, which, enclosing Marshal Bazaine and nearly 200,000 officers and men as well as considerable quantities of artillery, and protected by fortifications, was considered invulnerable; and the fact that it had been besieged for an even longer period than had Paris in no way detracted from

this estimate of its imposing strength. No authentic information respecting it had been received in Paris for weeks, but not the slightest misgiving had been felt, and it would have been deemed ridiculous even to dream of it succumbing to the enemy. Yet this hitherto unthought-of contingency was now rumoured as being about to occur, if, indeed, it were not already a fact. "Treason!" rushed to the lips of the confounded Parisians, and bitter comparisons were drawn betwixt the ability of generals when serving an Emperor and when serving a Republic. The next day—October 27th—the rumour appeared in the newspaper *Le Combat*—a journal conducted by Félix Pyat, who was one of the most rabid and venomous of the Jacobinical writers and was a man of paltry and cowardly character. Pyat printed the rumour, saying it was indisputably true, and that the Government knew of the occurrence which it referred to. The whole of this was denied the following day by the *Journal Officiel* of the Government, which enlarged upon the glorious past career of Bazaine and declared its confidence in his valour and patriotism. "As for *Le Combat*," it continued, "the Government could, if it wished, suppress it, but preferred to leave its condemnation to the indignation of public opinion." Public opinion, thus incited to manifest itself, straightway, in the guise of a riotous crowd, proceeded to the office of *Le Combat*, destroyed whatever it could lay hold of, and would undoubtedly have maltreated Pyat had not that individual carefully kept himself in concealment. This affair seemed likely to blow over, the Parisians having, on the subsequent day—the 29th—for once some better news to interest them. A military report announced that on the 28th the French troops had gained possession of Le Bourget, a village about four miles to the north of Paris, the enemy having been surprised and driven off during the night.

The day after this gratifying news was published, Félix Pyat, feeling stung by the Governmental denial of the rumour he had printed relative to Metz, revealed the source from which his information had come, to wit, Gustave Flourens, who had received the intelligence from Rochefort, the Socialist member of the Government. Could the rumour be doubted after that? Notwithstanding so explicit a statement, Pyat's revelation was generally discredited, so prone is a people to believe that

official announcements are always correct. However, in the evening of the same day, news came to hand which, when coupled with Pyat's declaration, were of ominous augury for the Government. It transpired that, owing to want of reinforcements to support the victors at Le Bourget, the enemy had retaken the village and had made great slaughter amongst the French troops. Imprecations upon Trochu arose on every side, public meetings denounced him, at the cafés and on the boulevards anger and indignation abounded, and throughout the night the passion which had been thus aroused showed no signs of subsidence.

The dawn of the 31st served only further to inflame it. Then it was discovered that, after all, the rumour about Metz having surrendered was true—an official placard at last testified to its accuracy. One hundred and eighty thousand more prisoners were to be added to the already huge number which the Germans had taken! Another official announcement stated that M. Thiers was about to apply to Count Bismarck for an armistice, for the purpose of holding national elections and thereby placing the Government of the country upon a legal basis. Negotiating—compacting with the enemy: to the excited Parisians it appeared as a crime of the highest treason, no matter what the object to be attained. As if to add fuel to the fire of their indignation, the Government sought to palliate the discreditable reverse at Le Bourget by casting the responsibility for it upon the officer who directed the victorious attack, instead of upon his superiors, including themselves, for failing to send reinforcements and vigorously maintaining the position he had gained. Jules Favre complacently remarked that there was no need to be alarmed, for Le Bourget did not form part of the general system of defence. Alarmed? No, disgusted and humiliated!

The position of the Government, inherently weak, became suddenly precarious at this fortuitous conjunction of losses and truce-seeking. Popular clamour and self-election had constituted it; popular clamour and other egotists might depose it. The indecision and nervelessness, worse than effeminate, of the men in power, increased the strength of the malcontents out of it, and the latter swiftly perceived that a golden opportunity

had presented itself for the realization of some at least of their ambitions.

The Committees of Vigilance were quickly convened in every arrondissement, and elected delegates who were to demand explanations from the Government and to insist that no armistice should be concluded. The officers of the National Guards met and consulted, but were undecided what line of action to adopt. Groups of citizens everywhere discussed the state of affairs, and it soon became evident that there was a general tendency to proceed to the Hôtel de Ville to interpellate the Government, to infuse into it fresh energy, or, if need be, to remove it. At Belleville, Gustave Flourens assembled his tirailleurs, and they also arranged to march, armed, to the Hôtel de Ville. The Central Committee also met, and, at Lefrançais' suggestion, decided to overturn the Government and proceed to the establishment of a Commune.

So, towards midday, the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville became the rendezvous of first one group of citizens or guards, unarmed, then another, until it was covered with a multitude of people. Some battalions of National Guards marched up to the Place in military order and with arms, but many battalions were represented only by delegates on peaceful missions bent. Deputations from public meetings and various committees arrived, and were at once received in audience by a member of the Government; but they were so numerous, and followed so quickly one upon another, that the reception room became crowded and the interviews confused and disorderly. Outside the building from the beginning, and now inside, as the throng became unmanageable, cries were raised of "Down with Trochu!" "Vive la Commune!" "No armistice!" and others of similar import.

About one o'clock the various mayors of arrondissements arrived, in order to consult with the central mayor, M. Etienne Arago, relative to holding municipal elections immediately, which, in their opinion, were imperatively necessary to calm the excited minds of the citizens. In this view M. Arago concurred, and he left the mayors to see the Government and gain its consent to the proposed measure. Eight members of the Government deliberated together in a room a little way off; to

them Arago explained his and the mayors' recommendation. Five members of the Government—Em. Arago, Favre, Ferry, Pelletan, Picard—approved it; three—Garnier-Pagès, Simon, Trochu—disapproved; the proposal, having the support of the majority, was sanctioned, and Arago was commissioned to inform the mayors of the fact.

Meanwhile the crowd outside had become more tumultuous and exacting. Not content with being represented by delegates and deputations, nor in learning that the Mayor of Paris was largely in accord with the latter, it wished, itself, to enter the Hôtel de Ville, and it gradually elbowed and pushed its way past the Guards who had been deputed to regulate and restrict admissions to the building, but ordered on no account to repel any attempted invasion by violence. This prohibition presently had for result the contemplated contingency: the crowd surged within the palace, thronged the halls, corridors, and courtyard, and constituted, in a very short time, a Babylonish bedlam. Various members of the Government had come separately to address the populace, but none of them received a respectful hearing.

About two o'clock the Central Committee and various Committees of Vigilance arrived, and were greeted with renewed cries of "Vive la Commune!" and "A bas Trochu!" Amongst these arrivals were the most notable leaders of Socialistic opinion in Paris—Blanqui, Delescluze, Vermorel, Millière, Gabriel Ranvier, Lefrançais, Régère, Pillot, and Tridon. If being held up one day to public scorn as an unscrupulous and unpatriotic inventor of lies and three days afterwards receiving the most authoritative confirmation of one's veracity constituted a hero, Félix Pyat should that day have been one. Pyat, however, manifested great diffidence about showing himself; his cowardice was accentuated by mistrustfulness of the people whom he flattered and excited. Nevertheless, he was sent for, and came, more by compulsion than voluntarily.

The Central Committee and others of the advanced political party edged their way through the throng into the Hôtel de Ville, where they divided into two currents—one wending towards the Government room, and the other to the hall occupied by the mayors. In the latter place a lively altercation

soon ensued betwixt the mayors on the one hand and Blanqui, Delescluze, and Pyat on the other; it was ended only by the civic authorities withdrawing from the room and from the Hôtel, where they deemed their utility for the present was over. They had not then received the Governmental reply which Arago had been authorized to deliver to them. Arago had been maltreated and delayed by the crowd in the course of his transit from room to room. However, the announcement was at last made that the Government had assented to the municipal elections being held without delay, and Arago, prompt to carry out this decision to its logical issue, went to his office—also invaded!—and sent circulars to the twenty mayors informing them that the elections would be held the next day, November 1st. Placards were ordered and printed, by which to make known the fact throughout the city early the following morning.

Into the large hall of the Hôtel de Ville, which had been vacated by the mayors and thronged by a madcap multitude, Rochefort, pale and agitated, entered and was recognised. Cries were raised for him, and amidst deafening uproariousness he was lifted on to a table; it upset and he fell, but both were re-established, and Rochefort proceeded to address the crowd. Socialist and aristocrat, he had neither thoroughly amalgamated these antagonistic orders nor wholly divested himself of the natural one when he took up the acquired. He attempted first to describe himself as one of the people, but received instantly the lie direct; amid increasing clamour he referred to the Government, to the elections, to the armistice and Thiers, at whose name the din became terrible. Rochefort could no longer be heard, and he descended from the table whilst angry menaces resounded against the unfortunate armistice negotiator. Another citizen sprang on to the table, and shouted out that the Government was deposed. Nominations of persons to succeed it were immediately bawled out from all parts of the room, every man declaring for his own peculiar predilection. A first list of twelve names was drawn up, including Blanqui, Delescluze, and Félix Pyat; this met with some, but by no means general, acceptance. Other names were writ on paper; every man that cared so to do drew up a list of names according to his own fancy. These heterogeneous and multifarious lists

were copied, hawked about, thrown out of windows to the crowd outside, alternately approved and condemned—the whole proceeding being enveloped in a confused tumult of noise and commotion.

Elsewhere in the Hôtel de Ville there reigned the same demon of uproar. No person or place was privileged; even the large hall where the Government sat was forced open and invaded, the mob in this instance being led on by Lefrançais and Vermorel. The members of the Government, now seven in number, were so hemmed in to the table around which they had been deliberating that they were unable to move, whilst the leaders of the crowd demanded the establishment of the Commune and the resignation of the Government, the latter in particular being urged with a vehemence that amounted, under the circumstances, to intimidation. The Government rightly refused to consent to demands urged in so violent a manner.

One of the provisional lists thrown from a window of the hall where the mayors had been fell upon Gustave Flourens, who, attired in melodramatic military costume, had just arrived on horseback at the head of his battalions of tirailleurs. He grasped the paper, read it, observed the absence of his own name, dismounted, and entered the Hôtel de Ville, followed by some of his men. Flourens quickly perceived that there was no general agreement among the unchecked and unheeded babbling and gesticulating mass of people, which thronged and overflowed in all directions; he thereupon drew up a list for the formation of a Committee of Public Safety, which, to the Jacobins, who were slavish would-be copyists of the great revolution of 1792-3, appeared the *beau ideal* of Governmental authority. Flourens placed his own name first, thus fittingly exemplifying his braggadocio character; then followed the names of Félix Pyat, Mottu, Avrial, Ranvier, Millière, Blanqui, Delescluze, Louis Blanc, Raspail—an old Revolutionist—Rochefort, Victor Hugo, and Ledru-Rollin. This list was acclaimed by the crowd surrounding Flourens, who, inflated by its plaudits, marched to the council room where the Government was confined and forced his way in. Jumping on to the table, he proclaimed the deposition of the Government

and the substitution therefor of a Committee of Public Safety. He read out the list of names which he held in his hands. Most of them passed uncontested; those of Rochefort, Hugo, Blanc, and Ledru-Rollin were of doubtful acceptance. To the list was added the name of Dorian, a junior member of the Government, a man of modest and unpretentious ability, who had won the estimation alike of the working and the educated classes.

Flourens next repeated the demand for the formal resignation of the Government, which was again refused, whereupon he declared that the members of the Government were prisoners, and should only leave the Hôtel de Ville as such. This announcement met with loud cries: "To Mazas!" "Shoot them!" "Finish them!" At these shouts, a well-disposed commandant of National Guards, M. Ibos, took alarm for the safety of the Government, and went out to gain assistance. His battalion was not far off; he went to it, and returned with some sturdy fellows. Entering the Palace again, he forced his way past the guards whom Flourens had placed at the door of the room, leapt on to the table, and confronted with defiance the Belleville favourite. Only a few of Ibos' men had been able to follow their leader; they formed but a handful against some hundreds of Flourens'. The position was critical, and an open conflict imminent. Suddenly, at a sign from Ibos, one of his followers, a man of herculean strength, seized General Trochu, lifted him from his chair, and carried him through the crowd to the door, which, at the same instant, was forced open by his comrades; through the doorway and down the staircase the man with his burden tumbled and rolled rather than walked, forcing a passage by the impetus of his weight and that of his helpers, through the mass of humanity which blocked and opposed the way. Arrived at the bottom of the stairs, the path was clear, for the guards there were ignorant of the occurrences above; they recognised Trochu, and voluntarily made way for him and his escort. Once outside the building the general immediately repaired to his quarters in the Louvre.

In the *mêlée* which was occasioned by this rapid abduction of Trochu, Jules Ferry and Emmanuel Arago managed also to escape. The remaining members—Favre, Simon, Pagès, and Pelletan, with Generals le Flô and Tamisier, the latter being

the commandant-in-chief of the National Guard—attempted to follow suit, but they were surrounded and held back until the door was reclosed and the hall again in undisputed possession of Flourens and his tirailleurs.

Flourens was ill at ease. The Government was declared deposed and a new authority acclaimed; there were, consequently, numberless orders to give and changes to make, and he knew not quite what to do. Blanqui was in the Hôtel, not far away, and Flourens had sent repeatedly for him; but he came not, and the messengers did not return. Blanqui, in fact, was himself arrested by a loyal battalion of National Guards, which had stationed itself betwixt the two large halls, in one of which were the Government and Flourens, and in the other he, Delescluze, and a host of their followers. This intervening battalion had performed signal service to the Government by preventing the two fractions of the invaders communicating with each other, and by intercepting and destroying the orders they sent forth. The first message from Flourens to Blanqui was permitted to go, but on the latter emerging from the room he was seized. After various ineffectual attempts had been made to rescue him, it was deemed advisable to endeavour to convey him out of the building; but this project was frustrated by some revolutionary guards who were encountered in the courtyard, and who, recognising their chief, engaged with his captors. In the struggle which ensued Blanqui escaped. He went at once to Flourens and took up the direction of the revolutionary movement. Orders were given for those National Guards on whom they could rely, to march to the Hôtel de Ville, which place was to be under the military command of Eudes, the murderer of the fireman at La Villette; another order was for Raoul Rigault to seize the Prefecture of Police. A provisional municipal commission was drawn up; it comprised 120 names, and included all the press revolutionary, socialistic, International and Central Committee leaders, or persons of any note amongst the working classes or with any following. A commission of urgency was formed, and it immediately ordered the seizure of the public ministries and offices and the mairies of the arrondissements; orders of a military nature were also despatched to the various forts

surrounding Paris. This commission further busied itself in distributing places and positions amongst the legion of applicants who, regardless of their fitness, coveted them. The Committee of Public Safety, which had been so much talked of during the afternoon, was finally arranged. Flourens' list being too long to be acceptable, the committee was formed of five persons only—Delescluze, Blanqui, Millière, Ranvier, and Flourens.

Thus occupied, the night wore rapidly on to the revolutionary chiefs, slowly to the imprisoned members of the Government, and pleasantly enough to the insurgent National Guards who filled the Hôtel. Hunger and thirst are natural enemies that must be yielded to, and, to satisfy or surfeit their demands, recourse was had to the extensive larders and cellars of the palace, which furnished edibles and liquors in excess of all requirements, whilst the insurgents experienced sufficient opposition from the loyal Guards to add zest to their own predominance and to afford an outlet for a mischievous and quarrelsome, though not, happily, bloodthirsty disposition. To the tumult and disorder of the afternoon and early evening drunkenness came to be added; it perhaps had a beneficial influence; certain it is that drunkenness *can* have a good effect: there is nothing in the world wholly bad. Midnight was near, when a notable change in the demeanour of the revolutionary leaders took place.

Looking from the windows of the Yellow Hall, where were Blanqui and Flourens, some of their adherents had perceived from time to time the arrival of battalions of National Guards on the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, which, by midnight, was covered with an orderly assemblage, very different to the unruly multitude which had occupied that space during the afternoon. The purport and sympathies of the new-comers could only be surmised by the spectators in the interior, but gradually a feeling of insecurity came over them. Presently one of the insurgents, in alarm, said, "We are surrounded; we are not the strongest."

It was true. Picard, who had left the Hôtel de Ville after the first invasion and before his colleagues had been hedged in to their table, had sanctioned the beating of the call to arms

for the National Guard, and the result of this was that loyal Guards to the number of nearly sixty thousand, fully armed, were now before and about the Hôtel de Ville, to put down the attempt which had been made to depose the Government. Large though the following of the revolutionist chiefs was, it was but a fraction of the entire population of Paris; great as was the dissatisfaction which the Government had aroused, it was not to be compared to the distrust with which the names of agitators like Blanqui, Delescluze, and Flourens was generally received.

The presence of such imposing numbers of loyal Guards evidenced to the leaders of this movement that the tables were turned upon them, and that it was their position which was now critical; to which must be added the position of the imprisoned members of the Government, who were still immediately surrounded by enemies, and whose lives would be in instant jeopardy should an actual conflict occur between the two sections of Guards. To conjure away both these menacing situations Flourens and Delescluze proposed that the members of the Government should be restored to liberty on condition that the chiefs of the revolutionary movement should be allowed to depart safe and sound from the Hôtel de Ville. Before this stipulation could be considered, a man burst into the room and exclaimed in affright, "We are betrayed! The Mobiles have entered by a subterranean passage!" The Mobiles—Bretons, devoted to Trochu, himself a Breton, speaking only the Breton dialect, semi-foreigners in Paris—the name was synonymous with massacre! General le Flô declared that he spoke Breton, and that unless he were allowed to go and prevent these Northerners from invading the hall, none within it would escape. Le Flô's offer was accepted with eagerness, and he departed—encountered the Bretons in the courtyard just at the moment when an affray was about to commence, and happily succeeded in preventing it. From them no further danger was to be feared, but this could not be said of the thousands of Guards, under the temporary command of Jules Ferry, which were massed in front of the Hôtel, all eager to get inside the building and to oust the intruders. The various entrances were closed against them, and M. Ferry disposed his men so as to force them open.

Meanwhile, within, the proposed agreement between the Government and the Revolutionists was not yet settled. Delescluze sent for Dorian, the junior member of the Government previously referred to, and finally a sort of convention was drawn up by the former on behalf of his party and assented to by Favre, Simon, Garnier-Pagès, Dorian, and General Tamisier on behalf of the Government. By this arrangement the municipal elections already convoked for that day—for it was after midnight, and November 1st was entered upon—were confirmed; furthermore, elections on the next day were to be held for the purpose of establishing, by popular voting, a Government of National Defence, the existing Government of course being eligible for re-election. The last clause in this convention stipulated that there should be no reprisals undertaken by the liberated Government against the leaders of the revolutionary movement. This conciliatory compromise was further agreed to by Flourens, Millière, and, after some hesitation, Blanqui. The next steps were to liberate the prisoners and evacuate the Hôtel de Ville. The first of these measures met with a marked and unexpected opposition from Flourens' tirailleurs who guarded the prisoners and the doors. They refused to obey their leaders or to recognise the agreement made, and the members of the Government were compelled to remain prisoners.

This action on the part of Flourens' men greatly complicated the situation. Delescluze and Dorian went out together to inform Jules Ferry of the compromise, and besought him, in order to avoid bloodshed, not to force an entrance. Ferry consented, and waited for two hours; still the doors were closed. Wrangling and disturbance continued uninterruptedly inside; on several occasions it seemed as if firearms would be made use of and fighting begun. Fortunately, however, physical weariness began to tell upon even the most ferocious and unyielding elements. The men who had persisted in keeping the members of the Government prisoners became gradually less defiant and more sleepy, so that, by about four o'clock, their opposition came to an end, and the prisoners were free. It was at the same moment that Jules Ferry, impatient at the long delay, forced open the doors which kept him from the

interior; at sight of his resolute and disciplined men, the little army of insurgents fled. Ferry made his way without much trouble to the hall where his colleagues had been detained, arriving just as Blanqui, arm-in-arm with General Tamisier, and Flourens, were about to leave. The staircase and entrances were now held by loyal Guards, and there was no further difficulty about departure. The remaining members of the Government mingled with Millière, Ranvier, and Delescluze in emerging from the hall, where for over twelve hours they had been imprisoned. Such conjoint exit of these political opponents was a tacit evidence of the understanding that had been come to between them.[1] Before long, all the leaders of the movement had dispersed. It was a more difficult task to get rid of the sleepy and drunken citizens, who lounged or lay about as contentedly as though they had been in their own apartments; by about five o'clock, however, this labour was accomplished. The Hôtel had suffered greatly by the invasion; staircases, windows, furnishings and decorations were damaged everywhere; many things were broken or irretrievably spoilt; litter and dirt lay in profusion.

The foregoing proceedings form what is known in French politics as the "affair" of the 31st October; an inoffensive and intrinsically meaningless date being the most convenient label for Frenchmen to affix on their kaleidoscopical political events.

[1] For pages 42–51 of text: *Actes*, t. i. pp. 210–222.

CHAPTER V

NOVEMBER 1ST TO DECEMBER 31ST, 1870

AS soon as Trochu, Favre, Picard, and Ferry knew that the bulk of the National Guards was with them, they repudiated the arrangement to which Favre, Dorian, and others of their colleagues had assented, and cancelled the preparations already made for holding the municipal elections.

In place of elections, the Government ordered a plébiscite to be taken November 3rd, on the single question as to whether it was to be maintained in office or not. This plébiscite resulted in an overwhelming affirmatory answer,[1] and thus the position of the Government was greatly strengthened, and it had now a tangible claim to represent Paris at least.

Making a tyrannical use of its newly confirmed power, the Government at once issued warrants for the arrest of the leading spirits in the affair of the 31st October—Flourens, Blanqui, Millière, Félix Pyat, Lefrançais, Tridon, Ranvier, Pillot, Eudes, Vermorel, Régère, Jules Vallès, journalist, Vesinier, also journalist, and Goupil being among the persons against whom this process was launched. Before, however, any of these warrants could be executed, another Prefect of Police had to be appointed, for the existing Prefect would not assist in so violent a contravention of the compromise which had been arranged in the early hours of November 1st. The new Prefect appointed was a barrister named Cresson, a friend of the minister Picard. Cresson executed the warrants where possible; several of the persons he sought—Blanqui, Millière, Flourens, Goupil, Régère, and Vallès—could not be found. Against

[1] 557,976 votes in favour of the Government.
62,638 „ against „ „

Delescluze no warrant was issued, personal favouritism on the part of Jules Ferry being apparently the cause of this singular exception.[1] Pyat, Tridon, and two others, after a short detention, were released, their complicity in the affair of the 31st October having been very slight. The Government was undesirous of bringing these prisoners to trial speedily; it was sufficient for it to have them under detention where they were powerless to create further trouble; moreover, even a Military Court was not precisely a machine for registering the wishes of the Government, and there was ever the risk that the trials might result in the acquittal of some of the agitators.

In addition to these arrests, various officers of the National Guard were relieved of their commands because of the part they had taken in the revolutionary movement, and Raoul Rigault, who had temporarily imagined himself to be head of the Prefecture of Police, was dismissed absolutely from the staff of that department.

The flagrant breach of the agreement made with the revolutionary chiefs that was involved in these arrests and in other reprisals of lesser note which the Government immediately undertook against its opponents, did not pass without open denunciation and resignation from some of the parties to the convention. Rochefort at once separated himself from his colleagues; Etienne Arago, the Mayor, and two of his deputies, resigned their offices; General Tamisier also relinquished, on the nominal ground of ill-health, the position of Commandant-in-Chief of the National Guards. To the latter office General Clément Thomas was appointed; the successor to Etienne Arago as Mayor of Paris was found in Jules Ferry.

To remove as far as it thought advisable every pretext for agitation, the Government ordered mayors and deputy mayors to be elected in the twenty arrondissements. This was very dissimilar to the Commune which the Socialists demanded, though it was put forward in substitution thereof. The elected in each arrondissement had no legal power of combination with other arrondissements; their duties were limited strictly to the districts which elected them. They had no chief of their own

[1] *Actes*, t. i. p. 226.

choice, as a Commune could have had, but were under the control of the central mayor, and, through him, of the Government. It is not possible to quarrel with the refusal of the Government to grant a Commune under existing circumstances, though no words are adequate to condemn its vacillation, weakness, and falsity in regard to the events of the 31st October. A Commune, or Common Council, elected by armed electors, representing *en bloc* the city of Paris, would have had greater influence over the National Guards than the Government, and there would thus have been two armed authorities in the city, with every prospect of a conflict breaking out between them, and the horrors of civil war being added to those of war with the foreigner. The Government, however, seemed incapable of adopting a strong and defiant attitude to the Socialists on this point; they permitted their love of power to play fast and loose with their convictions. It was with them, as it is with nearly all persons who jump suddenly into positions of responsibility, not upon their own merits, but by reason of extrinsic circumstances: they imagine themselves possessed of all requisite ability, until actual experience rudely makes manifest their incapacity.

The elections in the arrondissements took place on November 5th and 8th. Amongst the twenty mayors and sixty deputy mayors elected, the following appertained to the active Socialist party:—Delescluze, elected mayor of the 19th arrondissement; Ranvier, mayor, and Millière, Flourens, and Lefrançais, deputies of the 20th arrondissement; Jaclard, Léo Meillet, Malon, Dereure, Miot, Oudet, and Perin, elected deputy mayors in various arrondissements. Ranvier, Lefrançais, and Jaclard were at the time in prison, and Flourens and Millière were under police surveillance. The whole of the elect for the 20th arrondissement being thus under the ban of the law, the Government nominated a Commission to control and direct its administration, notwithstanding that the inhabitants of that quarter objected to such a procedure.

Out of the eighty persons elected, the total Socialist representation was twelve. This proportion was fairly in agreement with other indications of the relative strength of the extreme party at that period. There were, however, many of the other

sixty-eight mayors and deputies whose radicalism was of an advanced type, and between whom and the Socialists an accord on many important matters existed.

The negotiations for an armistice, the rumour anent which had served to increase the discontent of the Parisians on October 31st, terminated on November 6th in failure, like the previous attempt by Favre. This was due primarily to the proposed revictualling of Paris, which Thiers had asked for and Bismarck had refused. The latter's refusal was in part also due to the revolutionary attempt that had occurred; these Parisians, thought Bismarck, give them time enough, will defeat themselves. Paris was beginning to feel the scarcity of food; many of the ordinary edibles of life had completely disappeared. Wines and spirits there were in abundance, but of food only the coarsest could be had—horseflesh, salted meat, and bread of indifferent quality.

The siege had lasted nearly two months, and the enemy, instead of being, as the Parisians had at the outset thought he would be, physically and morally enervated by prolonged exposure and inability to obtain sufficient nourishment, was stronger than ever, well fed, well housed, excellently managed, and in good humour with himself, so that a successful surprise on the part of the French was almost an impossibility. To such a high state of efficiency the French forces within Paris presented a continually increasing contrast; they were all now suffering somewhat from an impoverished diet, from a mental depression caused by their enforced seclusion and the absence of encouraging news from the outside, and, worst of all, from the fatal tendency to indiscipline. Discussing instead of obeying orders was alarmingly prevalent, and the setting up before each individual of his political rights as a citizen rather than his military duties as a soldier. The public meetings which were held nightly in almost every arrondissement largely contributed to this unhappy condition of things, for the audiences were all soldiers, and the speakers were invariably Socialists. The latter inculcated in forcible and declamatory language insistence upon their political claims; found fault with the Government for inaction and treachery; magnified and lauded the power of the people; minimised and ridiculed the authority to

which they were subject; and advocated always the establishment of a Commune, which would respect and enforce the rights of the individual, secure equality for all, and inaugurate a universal brotherhood. The speakers doubtless believed what they said, and, in regard to the Government, they had some grounds for complaint; but the great fault of Socialism in general, to which these particular devotees formed no exception, is that its survey of humanity, though often extensive, is always superficial. The socialistic orators knew not quite to what their harangues tended; they were not sure about the necessity for strict discipline in the National Guards and Mobiles, and, as leaders of the people, their incertitude affected with a similar indifference the audiences which they addressed. At such a period it never occurred to them to sink all political questions until the end of the war, to unite loyally and manfully under the one direction which the Government of the National Defence might indicate, and to repress to the best of their ability any and every attempt to introduce discord or create dissension.

The Government, it must be admitted, was itself largely at fault: firstly, in ever permitting the citizens to elect their own officers; secondly, in sending out proclamations and manifestoes full of blatant, wordy rhodomontade, thereby giving an example of empty boasting which could not possibly be productive of good; thirdly, in not from the outset exacting rigorous discipline from all parties; fourthly, in failing to support the victors at Le Bourget; and lastly, in again setting a pernicious example to the city by disavowing the arrangement entered into between Dorian and Delescluze. When a Government can so flippantly play falsely, who can wonder that honour and truth should be at a discount?

Thrown back upon their own resources by the failure to obtain an armistice, the Parisians redoubled their energy in the construction of barricades and earthworks wherever it seemed that such might be required. They imagined that the Germans could not long delay bombarding the city and attempting to storm it; it would have been something like a relief had this been done. Trochu's "plan" for raising the siege began to be laughed at—with such *éclat* had it been announced, and

with such barrenness of result distinguished. It was, however, not generally known that the main reason for its sterility hitherto, lay with Gambetta, whose policy was to disregard the Government at Paris, and neglect its wishes, nurturing and forwarding his own immature and inexperienced ideas.[1] Trochu's plan was, notwithstanding, still in existence, and its author was seeking the opportunity to carry it into effect.

Away from the vicinity of Paris, the German armies continued to gain towns and battles. Verdun capitulated on November 8th, delivering 4,000 prisoners and a large quantity of war material to the victors, and shortly afterwards Neu Breissach also capitulated, giving up 5,000 prisoners and more than a hundred guns. On November 17th Count Kératry, marching with a force of Breton Mobiles in the direction of Paris with the intention of relieving it, encountered the Germans at Dreux, a town about forty miles to the west of the capital, and was defeated there, losing 200 prisoners. For this defeat Kératry was subsequently superseded in his command.

The Parisians were not aware of all these losses when, on the 14th November, they received news of a victory gained four days before by their countrymen, under the command of General d'Aurelle de Paladines, at Coulmiers, a little place near to Orléans. This was a battle of some significance, for the Germans evacuated the town of Orléans (which the French reoccupied), and retreated in the direction of Paris with all their war material. D'Aurelle had a large force under him, and the retreating enemy should undoubtedly have been pursued and smitten hip and thigh, as it was in the power of the French to do. No pursuit was, however, undertaken; and D'Aurelle, believing himself to be realizing the wishes of Gambetta, as well as of his own predilections, simply ensconced himself in and about Orléans.[2] Nevertheless, because of the unquestionable victory he had achieved at Coulmiers, he was made generalissimo of all the French forces outside of Paris.

Another slight advantage over the enemy was gained by Riciotti Garibaldi, who, with his father, the renowned Garibaldi, and brother, had taken up arms on behalf of the French.

[1] *Actes*, t. i. pp. 321–3.

[2] *Ibid.*, t. iii. 1st part, p. 15.

Riciotti surprised the Germans at Châtillon-sur-Seine on November 19th, and captured a quantity of war material and prisoners, with which he withdrew, not being in sufficient strength to hold the town.

Against these French successes, however, there is a continued record of German gains to be set. On November 24th the fortified town of Thionville capitulated, delivering over 4,000 prisoners and 250 guns, and three days later the fort La Fere was compelled to do likewise, 2,000 men and 70 guns in this case going to the victors. On the 28th November the resistance which Amiens had offered to their country's foe was overcome, and this quaint, ancient town was occupied by the invader. The same date also saw the defeat of General d'Aurelle at Beaune-la-Rolande, to which place he had at length advanced *en route* for Paris. This defeat was notwithstanding the fact that the French forces greatly outnumbered the enemy's. For this reverse D'Aurelle shall also, as Kératry, be removed from his command by the indignant and imperious Gambetta.

The Parisians, dependent as they were upon the intermittent intelligence that might be brought by carrier pigeons or balloons, did not learn of these losses until some time after their occurrence. The success at Coulmiers had filled them with jubilance, and it intensified the demand for some decisive action on the part of their own military chiefs. The weakness of General Trochu's character becomes here apparent, for whereas up to this time his "plan" had had in view a march from Paris to the north of France, and all preparations had accordingly been made in the north-west of the capital for the anticipated exit, now, by public clamour and Gambetta's demands, suggested by D'Aurelle's victory near Orléans, he swerves entirely away from his original project, makes Orléans, south of the capital, his aim, and transfers all preparations to the east of the city.[1] Nevertheless, something like decision and energy are infused into the proceedings, and a grand sortie is fixed upon for the end of the month, to which all Paris looks forward with anxiety and hope.

On the 28th November, large masses of troops were gathered

[1] *Actes*, t. i. p. 323.

on the south side of Paris; two immense armies having been formed, one under the command of General Vinoy, the other under that of General Ducrot. Guns, ammunition, and supplies were there also in readiness. To the National Guard, under the command of General Clément Thomas, was deputed the general safety and well-being of Paris, whilst the Mobiles and regulars should engage the enemy.

To disconcert and, if possible, damage the Prussians, a heavy fire was opened upon them late at night from the forts on the south side. Feigned attacks were made in other directions to throw them off the scent, but the real attack was in the south by Vinoy's army, which however, after some severe fighting, was forced to retire. The next day it was Ducrot's army that was to make an attack. Ducrot had prefaced the serious work he was about to undertake by the issue of a proclamation to his troops, in which he swore before the entire nation that he would either lead his army to victory or die in the attempt; he might fall, but would never retreat. Gambetta, at Tours, when he knew of the sorties, was similarly inflated with prescience; he telegraphed all over France that the hour of victory had come.[1]

Ducrot emerged from the wood of Vincennes and attacked the Germans on the road toward Villiers, a village about seven miles from the city boundary. He was met, and his advance stubbornly resisted. Fighting continued all the day of the 30th with tenacity on the part of the foreigners and desperation on the part of the French; but in the end, at this particular place the Germans won the day and the French were forced to fall back. At other places a little to each side of Villiers, the French were more successful, taking Bry and Champigny from the Germans, after very severe fighting. There were also serious and stubborn contests at Creteil and Epinay; but though great losses were inflicted by each party on the other, their relative positions remained the same.

The next day, December 1st, was devoted to a truce for the purpose of burying the dead and removing the wounded. The day following, whilst the French at Bry were quietly and

[1] *Actes*, t. iv. p. 63.

unconcernedly preparing breakfast, the Germans suddenly appeared and attacked them, the French, being utterly unprepared for a surprise, beating a hasty retreat. The same thing occurred at Champigny, and these two places were once more in possession of the enemy. Later in the day, however, the French forts directed a terrible artillery fire upon them, compelling the enemy to evacuate the villages, and subsequently the French soldiers again took possession of them. The French also attempted to retake Villiers, but failed. The next day, December 3rd, the attempt to force the enemy's lines was relinquished, and the French troops were withdrawn. They had displayed conspicuous bravery in the majority of instances, and had suffered severe losses; added to this there had been experienced, after the first day's battle, a great and unexpected fall in the temperature, so that for several days the troops, without sufficient protection, had camped upon an icy ground and been exposed to a keen frost. Amongst the French soldiers who returned to Paris was General Ducrot, whose oath, taken before the nation, was thus proved to have been only a foolish boast. He had exhibited courage and daring under fire; but he was neither victorious nor dead—not even wounded.

The victories of the French soldiers were so few that mention must be made of one gained by General Chanzy at Patay on December 1st, though it was more than neutralized by defeats which he suffered on the 3rd, and, after several days' hard fighting, on the 10th. Garibaldi had also slightly checked the Germans at Autun on December 1st. German successes formed, however, almost an unbroken tale. From the early part of December they had re-occupied Orléans, entered Rouen and Dieppe, occupied Blois, received the capitulation of Montmédy, captured Vendôme, Nuits, and, on the 21st, Tours. From the last-named place the Delegate Government had previously departed, finding the German forces coming unpleasantly near; it was now stationed at Bordeaux.

Notwithstanding these numerous losses, and their own inability to break the human band which gripped them so firmly, the ardour and patriotism of the Parisians showed no diminution. The pangs of hunger were often felt; the severity of the winter was extreme, and the absence of ordinary fuel

added to its rigours; the seclusion from the outside world and the negation of all amusements depressed them, yet on one point there was absolute unanimity and a striking enthusiasm. No capitulation for Paris! Other towns are smaller, weaker—they may succumb, but Paris is invulnerable, is the capital, and will fight to the bitter end. The Government, in its declarations, reflected this feeling. Jules Favre, when in September he declared and in November repeated [1] that not one inch of ground nor one stone of a fortress should be surrendered to the foreigner, only gave expression to the determination of all Paris and all France; and yet, if that declaration were to be maintained, it could only be by inflicting an irreparable defeat upon their enemy, for the latter had observed no secrecy about his intentions to demand territorial and other compensation for the enormous expenditure and loss the war occasioned him. The Parisians, nevertheless, reiterated their refusal to consider any such contingency as possible, for the recent sorties had not satisfied them of their incapacity to deal with the foe. They urged the Government to make yet another attempt to break their fetters; nay, they even threatened another 31st October, if their wishes were not complied with. They also will help in the work in a way they have not hitherto done: cannons for the National Guard are needed; a public subscription shall be opened, a stall erected in front of the noble church of La Madeleine for the reception of citizens' donations, great or small, and cannons shall be bought. The thing is done; subscriptions pour liberally in; each battalion and each staff is eager to give its quota to the fund: [2] the cannons are bought!

Urged on by the resolutions passed at public meetings and by numerous clubs, the most of which were organized or controlled by the Central Vigilance Committee, Trochu decided upon having another sortie, this time from the north side of Paris. It commenced on December 21st, but the Germans having captured a balloon that had been intended for the Delegate Government at Bordeaux, were aware of the project, and were therefore prepared for an attack; they had, notwithstanding, no easy task

[1] November 4th. Consequent upon the plébiscite in favour of the Government.

[2] *Actes*, t. i. p. 237.

to repel it. The hardest fighting occurred at Le Bourget, where the French fought with the greatest gallantry, gaining for a while some slight advantages, but before the close of the day being compelled to fall back. Desultory fighting took place on subsequent days, but some of the French soldiers were beginning to feel beaten, and lacked the confidence necessary to attack with spirit.

Hitherto the Germans had not bombarded either Paris or the forts, excepting as a defensive measure. They changed their tactics on December 27th, and fired upon a newly erected fort, Mont Avron, with their guns, rendering it by the next day untenable; this was also the case with the neighbouring village of Bondy. Both these places were occupied by the Germans as soon as it was known that they were deserted. Other forts in the same direction—east of Paris—received a similar treatment. The bombardment, once begun, was carried on incessantly, and replied to with equal persistence by the garrisons of the strongholds attacked.

All this time most of the leaders of the 31st October affair remained in prison; three of them, including Eudes and Pillot, in addition to those already named, were released towards the end of December. On the other hand, Flourens, on the 6th December, had been arrested,[1] after repeated efforts to effect his capture. He and Blanqui in the quarter of Belleville had been inaccessible to the agents of the Government. There they were supreme; the entire arrondissement sympathised with and protected them; they walked about openly, defiant of Cresson's endeavours to secure them.[2] Had Flourens remained there, he might never have been arrested; but he went outside Paris to the suburb of Creteil, and was then pounced upon and taken prisoner. The Belleville quarter was not alone in exhibiting flagrant disregard of the Prefecture of Police and its emissaries. Only five arrondissements out of the twenty would consent to receive police patrols:[3] the National Guards were their own police. The Government was, or permitted itself to be, powerless to secure respect for its officers and its wishes. Over and over again did Cresson complain to his

[1] *Actes*, t. i. p. 81. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 75. [3] *Ibid.*

superiors of the insubordinate attitude of citizens and Guards towards his agents, and of his inability, without active and material support, to enforce the Governmental decrees; his complaints were merely noted, and shelved because of their inconvenience. Wholesale abuses could not fail to result from such an inept centre of authority. People did what they wished, not what they were told; they regulated their own duties, served themselves as masters, and the Government was in reality their servant.

CHAPTER VI

JANUARY 1ST TO THE MIDDLE OF FEBRUARY, 1871

THE Jour de l'An was this year shorn of its festive character. Instead of universal happiness and merriment in the gay city, there were famine, heart-burnings, dissatisfaction, anxiety. The siege, two months of which were to have proved intolerable for the enemy, had now lasted three and a half months, and he thrived whilst they starved; the "plan" of Trochu had failed, the sorties had failed, the provincial armies had failed; the weather was exceptionally severe, the death-rate correspondingly high. Occupation was the dullest routine imaginable, whilst all manner of facts discouraged the idea of a successful resistance to their foe. Hope still lingered, but it had only itself for support. Thrown violently back from every chink of outlet from their bondage, the Parisians could only inveigh against the incapacity of their rulers, Trochu in particular being singled out by newspapers and populace to receive anathemas for want of energy and for feebleness. The charge was true. Trochu, though a brave and capable officer under a superior, was lacking in the decision and strength of character essential in a chief. He was scrupulous in satisfying his own conscience, and always succeeded in this mental self-justification, but the process of so doing completely stultified energetic and effective action, and narrowed his perception of things to his own personal radius, whereas he should have been oblivious of himself, and careful only of the wider and greater interests of the nation.

The enthusiasm of the soldiers for actual fighting against the Germans was on the wane, especially amongst the citizens of Montmartre and Belleville, who mostly belonged to the working classes. It has been said that the latter took their guns and ammunition for service, not against the enemy, but against their own capitalists, should an opportunity arise to establish a Com-

mune. Much need not be thought of this; there are at all times, and in all countries, disaffected ones, desperate man-haters, who are ignorant of justice, impervious to kindness, and deaf to any compromise betwixt the conflicting theories of life. Some of these there were in Paris, and they leavened, by their speeches and writings, a population more considerable than their deserts. It nevertheless remained a comparatively small and impotent population: *it* can never, even with its rifles and ammunition, establish a Commune for a day, and its idle gossip and vain threatenings may be relegated safely both to the common sense of the citizens at large, and to the particular attentions of those who act as police. If these do their duty—and why should they not?—the empty vapourings of heated imaginations will escape merely into a cooler atmosphere, and be lost. The utterances of such iconoclasts, however, are not to be confounded with the disapprobation manifested on all sides against Trochu and the Government, the expression of which fell more to the Socialist party than any other, only because it had the courage of its convictions, and the audacity to endeavour to give them practical effect.

Delescluze, at a meeting of the mayors at the Hôtel de Ville on January 5th, notwithstanding the presence of some members of the Government—amongst whom Favre—openly condemned the latter for inertia, and recommended that Trochu be superseded, and that greater powers be given to the municipality.

The supersession of Trochu had already been decided upon in ministerial councils; Gambetta, Picard, Favre, Arago, important Republicans, all complained of their chief's loss of popularity and of his military insuccess. He was to be dispensed with, but the question of replacing him was the stumbling-block which prevented the realization of their decision. Where to find a *Republican* general of ability? Ducrot, Vinoy, and other leading generals were never Republicans, and had scant sympathy for that political complexion; thus it was that Trochu remained at his post on sufferance.[1] Of this the public had no knowledge, and in the meeting of the mayors Jules Favre objected to

[1] *Actes*, t. i. p. 239.

the discussion of any such proposals as that made by Delescluze. A stormy scene ensued, during which Delescluze left the room. The next day red placards were found posted on the walls in various arrondissements, condemning the Government, and again demanding the election of a Commune. These were issued by 140 delegates of the twenty arrondissements, and their names were appended thereto.[1] Though the placards were speedily torn down by the police, they had the effect of causing General Trochu to make a notable declaration, viz., that the Governor of Paris—*i.e.*, himself—would never capitulate.

The International Association of Workers, largely influenced by the energetic Varlin, also held several meetings, at which it was declared that the feebleness of the Government constituted an additional reason why they should become strong, and measures were accordingly adopted for the further propagation of their ideas in the arrondissements.[2]

The Government was stung by the reproaches hurled at it from all quarters; it was spurred on also by the Prussian shells, which fell thickly in the city, and caused extensive damage and many deaths. The speedy termination of the siege was becoming daily more imperative; the National Guards clamoured for a sortie *en masse*, and the Government therefore decided to again attempt to break through the investing lines.

The sortie, though not *en masse*—this was rightly judged to be a hazardous experiment, unlikely to be justified by results—was arranged on a grand scale. It took place on the 19th January, in the western outskirts of the capital, and is known as the battle of Buzenval.

General Trochu was personally in command, and Generals Vinoy and Ducrot in subordinate commands. Eighty-five thousand men took part in it; for the first time, and upon their own urgent insistence, many battalions of National Guards were

[1] Among the 140 signatures the following may be mentioned: Babick, Beslay, Caullet, Champy, Chardon, Clémence, Demay, Duval, Garreau, Ch. Gérardin, Eug. Gérardin, Genton, Fortuné, Ferré, Johannard, Lacord, Malon, Martelet, Léo Meillet, Tony Moilin, Oudet, Parisel, Pillot, Pindy, Puget, Régère, Sicard, Theisz, Tridon, Urbain, Viard, Vaillant, Vallès.

[2] Varlin, Theisz, Frankel, Pindy, and Verdure were actively concerned in this propaganda.

included in the fighting forces.[1] Fortune favoured the French at the beginning of the day's work, both Ducrot's and Vinoy's divisions attaining distinct advantages over the enemy; the fighting went on stubbornly all day, the Germans losing, the French gaining ground, until towards night reinforcements only were needed to complete a decided victory. But reinforcements were lacking, and the bulk of the army on the field of battle had become a confused and unworkable mass, so that Trochu feared a great catastrophe would result should the Germans make a determined attempt to advance their positions. Moreover, the Germans had received reinforcements both of men and artillery; at the close of the day they were better able to fight than the French. Actuated by these considerations, Trochu gave the signal to retreat, and, after all, the day was lost.

The National Guards who had taken part in this serious encounter acquitted themselves variously: some exhibited unmistakable heroism and courage, whilst others shirked danger and evinced a cowardly inclination to retreat.[2]

The news of this last failure exasperated the Parisians. Maledictions upon Trochu came from every mouth, and the population seemed at last to have made up its mind that nothing good could come from him. Had he at once declared himself in favour of a *levée en masse*, which press and people looked to as a final means of deliverance, he might have retained his position; but such a crude and ungoverned idea Trochu refused to entertain, and from that moment his hours as Governor of Paris were numbered. With his colleagues and the whole city against him, to resign his functions would have been the most natural course to be taken; but with a stubbornness begot of his desire for self-justification, he would not resign in form, but compelled his colleagues to dismiss him.[3] This dismissal took effect on January 21st, but it applied only to Trochu's military offices; he remained, at the repeated requests of some members of the Government, president of their Council. To fill the military post thus vacated Vinoy was immediately appointed, with a notable difference in title: Trochu had been both Governor of Paris and Commander-

[1] *Actes*, t. i. pp. 240, 241. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*

in-Chief of the army of Paris, but his successor was appointed merely to the latter office.[1] Was it not enough to justify the assumption that this was a deliberate omission dictated by a recollection of Trochu's recent statement that the Governor of Paris would never capitulate—as much as to say, if capitulation must come, there at least shall be no official Governor of Paris to sign a treaty of submission to the enemy?

Vinoy's appointment met with little favour in republican Paris. He was a worthy and courageous man, but had had the misfortune to have assisted in a military capacity the Emperor Napoleon, in his *coup d'état* of 1851; the fact was revived in an exaggerated and embittered form, and Vinoy was declared to be an "accomplice" of Buonaparte, as though he had been a criminal, and it was averred that he would ride rough-shod over the people and oppress them, as had been done under the Empire.

Public opinion had become so disgusted with the utter failure of the Government to ameliorate the calamitous condition of the city, that the Socialists thought again a favourable opportunity had presented itself to instal themselves in the Hôtel de Ville. Various societies of a semi-political character urged the Government to convoke a National Assembly, so as to make greater headway against the enemy; others, of more socialistic tendency, made again the request for Communal elections. A meeting, held at Montmartre, on the evening of January 21st, decided upon making another attempt the next day to upset the Government, and Blanqui, who was there, promised his assistance. Delescluze also actively moved in the matter. He suggested to one Lavalette, who was a member of the Central Committee, to endeavour to secure the release of Flourens from prison. Lavalette at once obtained the services of a hundred armed Bellevillites—the quarter which had elected Flourens as a deputy mayor—and at midnight proceeded to Mazas prison and demanded the release of Flourens and other political offenders. The governor of the prison imprudently opened the outer door in order to parley with his interlocutors, when the latter rushed through the doorway and, being speedily in possession of the prison, at once released Flourens and some

[1] *Actes*, t. i. p. 242.

others. Flourens now headed the small armed force, and proceeded to the mairie of his arrondissement. This arrondissement, it will be remembered, had been directed since November 8th by a Commission, all the elected mayors having laboured under the disqualification of legal process. The Commission had not anticipated any midnight attack, and the mairie was left unguarded, so that Flourens and company easily installed themselves within it. Flourens wished to at once proceed to the Hôtel de Ville and overturn the Government, then to organize a new army, and with it march against the Germans ; he sent messages to various commanders of battalions to come and join him, but only one of them answered. This hasty project had therefore to be abandoned, and the dark hours of the night were passed pleasantly enough with the aid of two thousand rations of bread and wine which were stored there for distribution to the famished people of the locality. Towards daybreak the nocturnal eaters were apprised that General Clément Thomas was coming in pursuit of them with a company of custom-house officers, tried and reliable men ; they lingered not an instant, but vacated the mairie as quickly as they had entered it.

Pursuant to the understanding arrived at the preceding night, shortly after midday of the 22nd there assembled various battalions of National Guards and a crowd of citizens in front of the Hôtel de Ville. There were some hundreds of members of the International Association from Batignolles, under the leadership of Varlin and Bernard Malon ; Flourens with his Belleville tirailleurs ; numbers of those who had made up the Montmartre meeting of the previous night ; Delescluze, also at the head of a battalion of National Guards from La Villette. Blanqui was in a neighbouring café, and did not put in an appearance. The gates of the Hôtel de Ville were closed, and for some time the people could do nothing but discuss the state of affairs amongst themselves. Eventually, some deputations from the battalions were permitted to enter. They were received by M. Gustave Chaudey, one of the adjuncts or deputies to the central mayor. The deputations requested that immediate municipal elections should be held. M. Chaudey could only promise to lay the demands before the Government

—a response evidently unsatisfactory to the delegates and the people.

An altercation commenced outside the entrance between the disappointed populace and three officers of the Hôtel de Ville guard; the crowd began to get excited, its orators made speeches to it, and, as successive deputations returned from their interviews with Chaudey bearing only the same indefinite reply, the expressions of disapprobation became ever more manifest. The last battalion of National Guards to arrive on the Place was the 101st, commanded by one Sérizier, who, perceiving the three officers engaged, unsupported, in disputation with the people, instantly ordered his men to fire upon them, and this was done. One of the officers fell mortally wounded; the two others were not struck, and made good their escape. Suddenly the windows of the Hôtel de Ville were opened, and were filled with Breton Mobiles, who, seeing one of their staff officers falling, fired upon the people, causing them instantly to fly in all directions. Some of the National Guards entered the houses opposite, from the windows of which they replied to the Bretons. Others took up positions at the corners of the street, and fired upon the Mobiles. A lively fusillade ensued and, although the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville was presently occupied and cleared by other Bretons and loyal Guards, the firing lasted for nearly half an hour, and resulted in a death and wounded roll of from twenty to forty persons.[1] The Government troops made various arrests—among them being Delescluze and Sérizier—and then strongly fortified the adjoining streets, planting them with guns and mitrailleuses, and taking other precautions to prevent a renewal of the disturbance.

This affair was stigmatized by the Socialists as a deliberate Government plan to assassinate the people, and Gustave

[1] Though the number of dead and wounded, at the utmost, is a perfectly manageable figure, it is wonderful what discrepancies exist in the various authorities as to the precise totals. Some even put the grand total at sixty, whilst the official account says, very indefinitely, a "score" of dead and wounded. (*Actes*, t. i. p. 248.) The official account would certainly not err on the side of exaggeration, and probably from thirty to forty persons were killed and injured.

Chaudey was generally credited, though erroneously, with having given the order to the Bretons to fire. The Government, on the other hand, was powerless to do its will. It issued numerous warrants for arrests, but could effect only a small proportion of them owing to the opposition of the Socialist municipalities, supported, as the latter were, by the citizen Guards of their respective districts. General Vinoy suppressed two newspapers which had taken a leading part in condemning the Government, viz., the *Reveil*, directed by Delescluze, and the *Combat*, directed by Félix Pyat. He also ordered all the clubs to be closed, they being considered as hotbeds of sedition, agitation, and communism. Both these measures were of doubtful utility. There were plenty of other newspapers to carry on the work of those suppressed; and as there was no prohibition of new journals, there soon appeared *Le Vengeur* under Pyat's auspices, and the *Mot d'Ordre* under Rochefort's. As to the clubs, their members met in the streets, and were more bitter than ever in their denunciations of Vinoy and the Government. Presently their anger had other material to sustain it.

The fears of the Parisians that their rulers meditated capitulation were well founded. The siege had now lasted over four months; provisions of all sorts were almost at an end; every sortie from within and effort from without to relieve the city had proved futile; the rate of mortality had latterly risen abnormally, owing to the deprivation of fresh food, the cold weather, and the Prussian bombardment. The Parisians, notwithstanding their sufferings, did not wish to surrender. The rumours of capitulation worried and exasperated them exceedingly. They would fight to the end; but the Government, less determined, less sanguine, and less sincere than the people, had already negotiated with Bismarck for an armistice, and had learned the terms upon which one would be granted. Paris was not alone involved in this. A continuance of provincial defeats, some of a very grave nature, had rendered it imperative for all France now to make up its mind whether it were not wise to acknowledge itself vanquished, rather than prolong so disastrous a conflict. The armistice which Jules Favre and Bismarck were now endeavouring to arrange was

with the object of decisively answering this question by the election of a National representative Assembly, which alone could say the last word.

When Paris, on January 27th, learnt that negotiations for capitulating were far advanced, it was thrown into a state of feverish excitement. It knew not exactly the terms, but rumour had it that the forts were to be delivered to the Prussians. It was equivalent to surrendering Paris itself! Some National Guard officers rapidly decided to prevent such ignominy. Brunel, colonel of a regiment de marche, having the support of thirty-five battalions, and Piazza, commandant of battalion, wrote out an order which they signed with the respective titles of "General-in-Chief of the National Guard," and "Chief of Staff," requiring the alarm to be given, to assemble the National Guards, then seize the forts, shoot the admirals who were in charge of them, and prevent their occupation by the Prussians. This order was sent round to various battalions of National Guards, and it was expected that from twenty to thirty battalions would respond. The order, however, fell into the hands of M. Cresson, the Prefect of Police, who promptly extinguished the project by causing the two pretended generals to be surrounded and arrested in a house in the Boulevard Voltaire. Some two or three hundred men turned up at the rendezvous appointed, but learning that their leaders were in prison, dispersed. Cresson informed the Government of the affair, and demanded that severe repressive measures should be taken against the inculpated persons. He asked for a court-martial, but the Government refused to grant it. Brunel and Piazza were sent to Vincennes prison, there to await trial before a Military Court.

The armistice was finally agreed to, and signed on the following day, the 28th. The chief conditions of it were :—

Cessation of all hostilities throughout France for twenty-one days, and the immediate election of a National Assembly.

The deliverance of the forts around Paris to German occupation.

All garrisons of forts around Paris and the garrison of Paris to be prisoners of war, with the exception of 12,000 men, which would be left armed for service inside the city.

The National Guards to retain their arms, and be charged with the preservation of order in the city.
Revictualling allowed.

The stipulation that the National Guards would be allowed to retain their arms was a solace to the members of the Government.[1] Had disarmament been required, it would have been difficult to have effected it, because it would have seemed to the Parisians an abject and humiliating sacrifice, which in all probability they would have refused to assent to, and also because a certain troublesome portion of the community, of socialistic and revolutionary inclinations, would have been sure to decline to lay down their arms, really out of hostility to the Government, though ostensibly from the patriotic motive of not yielding to the Prussians. The disarmament of the National Guards was thus a hornet's nest which must undoubtedly some day be attacked, but which the Government hoped would lose its stinging properties the longer it was left untouched. This was the real meaning of the supreme solace which the permitted retention by the National Guards of their arms constituted for the Government.

When the armistice was finally arranged, the Government found that it had only a nominal existence. Its origin, as well as its title, belied the assumption of authority with an admission of defeat, and its claim to govern ceased with the open abandonment of defence. The Government felt this, and was impotent; the disaffected everywhere knew it, and took licence. The Government's refusal to grant Cresson a court-martial was actuated by a knowledge of its own moribund condition; its authority was disregarded, and in consequence it was not exerted even to the extent that it might have been. The clubs which had been closed only a week before, audaciously reopened, and none dared to interfere. They and the newspapers clamoured for Delescluze and other semi-political prisoners, who had been sent to Vincennes, just outside the city, to be brought to a Paris prison—and they were brought. Now that revictualling was about to commence, sundry erewhile concealed articles

[1] *Le 18 Mars*, p. 27.

of food made their appearance for sale—they were instantly seized by whoever wished, and their owners maltreated for having hidden them. These violators of liberty enjoyed absolute immunity. So difficult was it to maintain any semblance of respect for authority that Cresson gave in his resignation as Prefect of Police, but withdrew it on the reproach of Vinoy, who said to him, "Do not abandon your post in the presence of danger!"[1]

Even betwixt the members of the Government who were at Paris there were discord and conflict. By the intervention of M. Emmanuel Arago and General le Flô, Minister of War, General Soumain, whose duty it was to institute the Council of War which should try Deleścluze, was induced to sign an order of "No charge" in regard to that individual, and to send it to the Prefect of Police so that Deleścluze might be set at liberty. Cresson did not obey the order, but took it to Vinoy and threatened his instant resignation if it were not withdrawn. Vinoy burnt the order, and went to the ministers Arago and Le Flô to demand the dismissal of Soumain from his position. This was done, but only after a stormy scene between Vinoy and the ministers, in the course of which the former thus addressed Arago: "*Mon Dieu, Monsieur le Ministre,* I know not if you understand what are my powers as Commandant-in-Chief under the state of siege, but they are such that I can arrest the first comer in the street; and I shall never permit any one that is under my orders to place an arrested person at liberty without my previous consent." Deleścluze remained in prison.[2]

Between the Government at Paris and its delegation at Bordeaux there was yet greater friction, brought on, one might say wilfully, by the too imperious Gambetta, who, having for some months occupied a position practically of dictator to provincial France, knew not that there were limits to his sway—limits imposed even by that central authority which he had so constantly flouted, and which at that moment was but a shadow of power. Upon the cardinal question of the surrender of Paris, it soon became evident that Gambetta was at complete variance with his colleagues in the capital. When he was

[1] *Le* 18 *Mars*, p. 46. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 50. *Actes*, t. i. p. 249.

informed of what the latter had done, he was filled with indignation, and denounced them as traitors to their country. He would not hear of surrender, but clamoured with passionate vehemence for a continuation of the war to the uttermost. Of his own authority he issued a proclamation to this effect. He also issued decrees entailing elective disabilities upon former Imperialist office-holders or candidates. This was so sweeping and arbitrary a measure that even Count Bismarck took exception to it, as tending to prevent the proposed National Assembly fully representing the country.[1] The bellicose attitude of Gambetta also led to a suspension for twenty-four hours, by the Prussians, of the revictualling of Paris, and it was only by the Paris Government annulling the decree and proclamation of their fiery colleague that the withdrawal of the armistice itself was averted. In consequence of this condemnation of his conduct, Gambetta resigned his office.

Meanwhile, Paris was thrown into a turmoil of excitement over the elections to the National Assembly, which were fixed to take place on February 8th. The clubs all became electoral rendezvous, the newspapers electoral propagandists. The general burden of speech and pen was the same everywhere: "Paris has been betrayed; the Government are traitors! Two hundred and fifty thousand men in the regular army, and more than that number of National Guards, and yet the citadel has been surrendered: it is a monstrous trickery, a terrible crime, and the Government ought to be arraigned. The guillotine has work to do; erect it!" Better use might certainly have been made of those armies at an earlier epoch, but it was now the mighty hand of famine that necessitated the capitulation. A few more days of the siege, and the full weight of that famine hand would have been felt. Not having been so felt, people treated it as though it were a chimera, and the frightful anguish it would have created in less than a week was unthought of. On all sides language was employed against the Government which stopped short of nothing, and represented almost every unbridled thought that political animus can compass. It was the usurpation by every man of personal

[1] *Actes*, t. vii. p. 319.

infallibility, and the inferential irrefutable criminality of whosoever disagreed with him.

Coincident with this outflow of verbal pestilence, there was an exodus from the city of numbers of its best inhabitants. The gates were now open, and ingress and egress were almost unrestricted. Thousands of well-to-do citizens—the most law-abiding, the most courageous, and the most sensible—were glad to leave their enforced seclusion and the military duties of the past five months and escape for a while to the provinces to recruit their health and to see their wives, families, or friends. The number of these attained, before the day of the elections, the enormous total of 130,000.[1] For them the elections were not of such moment as a change of scene and the sight of dear faces that for months had been only a remembrance. The people that remained in Paris belonged largely to the poorer classes, who could not afford to dispense with the small pay and rations allotted them by the Government, and could much less afford the expense of a journey beyond the city. Trade and commerce were absolutely at a standstill, and these citizen Guards were without their usual employment, and were likely to continue so to be, until, by a more or less gradual process, industry and business should resume their normal conditions. Finally, although Paris had capitulated, it was still an open question whether the war would be continued or not, and the uncertainty of this was a grim shadow which hovered over and prevented the resuscitation of trade.

February 8th in due time arrived, and with it the elections throughout France. The early morning in Paris brought into view two declarations from members of the Socialist party. One was a requisition, found posted on the walls, for the accusation of all the members of the Government upon the charge of high treason; it was signed by Raoul Rigault, Lavalette (who had released Flourens from Mazas prison), and others. The other announcement was an article by Millière in *Le Vengeur*, making certain very specific charges against Jules Favre—that he had represented to be his wife a lady who was really the wife of another, and that, consequent upon this, he had

[1] *Le* 18 *Mars*, p. 58.

made various false statements in official documents in relation both to the said lady and to the parentage of the children he had had by her. It is easy to perceive that Millière's motive in publishing this on the election day was to discredit Favre and prevent his election. In this he failed, although Favre received nearly the lowest number of votes of the forty-three representatives who were elected for Paris and the Seine. Others elected were Delescluze, Félix Pyat, and Rochefort, each by a considerable number of votes. Millière was elected, but was below Favre. Gambon, an old advanced Republican; Bernard Malon, a young but well-known socialistic writer; Tridon, the barrister; Tolain, one of the founders of the International Association; Vesinier, also pertaining thereto; Clémenceau and Tirard, mayors of the 18th and 2nd arrondissements respectively, and M. Thiers were also elected. Varlin and Cluseret were amongst the non-elected. Delescluze was immediately released from prison, so that he might proceed to Bordeaux to take up his duties of deputy. He was, however, in ill-health, and sat little in the Assembly.

The most notable result of the Paris elections was the almost total eclipse of the conservative or moderate element, and a correspondingly huge preponderance of socialistic and advanced republican deputies. With the exception of Favre, none of the members of the Government were elected. The demagogic whirlwind, which on September 4th had gathered them in its centre and scattered their adversaries, had now veered about, and they in turn were scattered. Cresson, the energetic Prefect of Police, saw danger in these results, and hastened to demand stringent measures to counter-balance the triumph of democracy, and to maintain the peace which he thought to be in jeopardy;[1] the Government, however, was in a comatose state —could only, metaphorically, hold up its hands in despair and await the course of events. Such an imbecile set of rulers has seldom, in the history of the world, occupied the seats of power of a great nation.

Its brief and inglorious career was now over: at the first meeting of the newly elected National Assembly at Bordeaux, held

[1] *Le 18 Mars*, p. 59.

on February 12th, this weak-kneed Government resigned the functions it had selfishly usurped and had so little known how to use. It thereupon became the first duty of the nation's representatives to appoint a successor to the Government of the National Defence.

The National Assembly, as a whole, did not reflect the advanced opinions of Paris, Lyons, Marseilles, Bordeaux, and the other large towns of France, in which, the artisan class preponderating, the elected of the people were chiefly Republicans or Socialists. The agricultural towns and districts included within them by far the greatest part of the French population, and this portion of the people was still conservative and religious, and had elected men of similar beliefs to represent it. Thus it transpired that a huge majority of the deputies at Bordeaux held such old-fashioned yet powerful opinions, and were, moreover, of monarchical (Orléanist) leanings. One of the deputies was remarkably indicated for the chief position in the next Government by the number of constituencies which had elected him—twenty-five in the provinces, and Paris. This notable and, in parliamentary annals, unparalleled expression of confidence fell to the lot of M. Thiers, the old statesman who had refused to form the Government of the National Defence on September 4th. The National Assembly recognised the popular mandate by appointing Thiers chief of the Executive Power, with liberty to appoint his own ministers. This was tantamount to constituting Thiers an autocratic ruler, and such full power has rarely, if ever, passed, at the bidding of electoral multitudes, into the hands of a man who was seventy-three years old.

Thiers' life had been spent in the channels and usages of diplomacy and government. He was known to be shrewd, cautious, and skilful, whilst his general capacity was undoubtedly of the first rank. For all these reasons, for his former service and allegiance to the Orléanist dynasty, and for the moderation of his recent and present republican attitude, he was commended to the nation as the fittest man in France to whom to confide the most arduous and delicate task which ever befell a Frenchman—that of negotiating with their victorious enemy for terms of peace.

This was the aim and end of the Bordeaux Assembly. It was evident to the majority of its members that peace had become essential; defeats had accumulated upon defeats, and the utmost resources of the nation had already been called upon; trade throughout the land was stagnant, and the normal conditions of society were broken up and supplanted by a jumble of barbarisms which in more than one place threatened to create additional troubles. Unless their conqueror wished to blot them out as a nation or to impose conditions that should manifestly be outrageous, peace must be secured.

Thiers' first actions were to nominate his ministers. He re-appointed Jules Favre to the office of "Foreign Affairs"; General le Flô to "War"; Jules Simon to "Public Instruction," and E. Picard was transferred from "Finance" to the "Interior"; General Vinoy and Jules Ferry were also retained in their respective posts. It may, in justice to Thiers, be said that at the time of these appointments he was ignorant of the real extent of the feebleness and incapacity which some of the above officials had exhibited during the preceding month. Looked at from another aspect, the re-appointments, of Favre and Le Flô in particular, were of slight account; these ministers were no longer able to initiate policies, but were merely administrative instruments whose control and direction would be in Thiers' hands.

When Thiers had got his Ministry arranged, a considerable and increasing diversity of opinion existed as to what was the political character of his Government. That it might or could be Imperialist may be dismissed at once as out of the question. But was it Monarchical or Republican? Thiers and his ministers were personally republican, yet it was a momentous truth that France as a whole was not so. The Orléanist representation in the Assembly was two-thirds of the total, and it soon became manifest that this majority was intriguing for the re-establishment of a monarchy with an Orléanist prince at its head. By the election of Thiers as Chief of the Executive Power it thought to prepare the way for such an advent. Thiers himself, dependent on that majority, and not without ambition even in his old age of occupying perhaps a still nobler position than that he had now attained, coquetted with the Assembly,

and was less decisive in the expression of his ultimate intentions than the Republicans required to completely reassure them that no such project as that suggested was entertained by him. Thus France found itself with an Assembly avowedly brought together for one object—to decide upon peace or war—and deliberating, formally, only upon that, but, informally and in segments, agitating and troubling itself over another bone of contention, as if the first-named were not enough for it to think about. In this condition we must leave it and return to events in Paris.

On February 9th, General Vinoy, in accordance with the terms of the armistice, commenced the disarmament of the 250,000 soldiers of the regular army that were encamped around or within Paris. This was a process to which these troops, more accustomed to discipline than the National Guards, submitted without outward demur. Inwardly, however, there existed a feeling of intense dissatisfaction because of the defeats, the capitulation, and the compulsory degradation they had now to undergo, the origin of all which they not unnaturally traced to the incapacity of the late Government. After disarmament, the soldiers were billetted upon the population. It was a step unavoidable, but it threw together two huge and distinct classes of people who were animated by a common discontent and repugnance to authority; and it could not have other effect than to produce some sort of friendship and fellow-feeling between them, creating a bond of unity, however slight it might be, where there had been none.[1]

Twelve thousand soldiers were allowed to retain their arms, for service inside the city. There they are—12,000 good men and true; but there are nearly two millions of people to keep in order, and society is already in an unhinged state. The real force in the city is not vested in those 12,000 regulars, but in the 200,000 or more National Guards.

[1] *Le* 18 *Mars*, p. 56.

CHAPTER VII

FROM THE MIDDLE OF FEBRUARY TO MARCH 17TH

THE National Guards, however, lacked unity. In the elections of the 8th they had voted without common direction or understanding. The results were not wholly displeasing to them, yet it was thought that even better results might have been accomplished had the Guards been guided beforehand to greater uniformity of action. A meeting of 500 delegates from various battalions had taken place on the 6th at the National Circus, with such an end in view; but there was not time then to arrange and execute any plan by the 8th. A preliminary step, however, was taken: that of deciding upon another meeting for the 15th, and inviting, through the Press, all battalions of the National Guard to send delegates thereto. This meeting was to be held in the large hall of the Tivoli—"Wauxhall"—16, Rue de la Douane. Two at least out of the seven officers who signed the invitation to this meeting were members of the Central Committee; their names were Vaillant and Courty.

The Central Committee, the International Association, and the other republican and socialistic committees and assemblies were all at this time seeking for the same object—unity. Out of the weakness of the governing authorities went forth their strength, and they felt that they were strong, but, for want of a common organization and of a central directorate, their power was being wasted. All these bodies, in the persons of some of their members, were linked with all the others. They were all composed chiefly of National Guards; all existed under similar conditions and were animated by similar sentiments; they were elemental atoms fit for combination, and needed only bringing together for the incorporation to be effected.

The meeting called for the 15th was duly held and numerously attended by delegates representing eighteen out of the twenty arrondissements of Paris. Preliminaries only could be then discussed; a Commission was named to formulate in writing the base of a federation. For the next week the clubs and public meetings talked of nothing else. Additional poignancy was infused into the discussions and suggestions, by the announcement made that the Government intended to withdraw from a great number of the National Guards, and, before long, from the entire force, their pay of 1 fr. 50 c. (30 sous) per day. It was an intimation ominous not only of loss of income and subsequent distress, but of disarmament also—of that evil day which Jules Favre and colleagues had deferred under the virtuous and self-satisfying pretext that an armed National Guard was a solace to them. Protests against both the projected courses were freely uttered, and the desire for unity and federation was intensified. The condition of the National Guards was become so turbulent and frothy, so indisciplinary and uncontrollable, that their Commander-in-Chief, General Clément Thomas, and his Chief of Staff, resigned their positions on the 16th February. General Vinoy took up the thankless office of Commander for some days, pending the appointment of a successor to Thomas.

The Tivoli, Wauxhall, was on February 24th the scene of another meeting of National Guard delegates, before whom there were laid the Statutes of Federation which had been drawn up by the Commission appointed on the 15th. These statutes were not then discussed; renewed protests were made against any attempt to disarm the National Guards, and it was resolved to resist any such attempt by force. *Apropos* of the vacancy existing in the Chief Commandantship, a declaration was made that the National Guards would recognise only their own elected officers. The meeting finally closed with a determination to proceed to the Place de la Bastille, there to commemorate the Revolution of February, 1848, and render homage to its martyrs. This procedure had been suggested first by the International Association of Workers, and its idea was taken up with avidity by all kindred bodies. From ten o'clock in the morning to six o'clock in the evening, there was a constant succession of detachments of National Guards, officers

and bands of music at their heads, defiling at the foot of the column of July, which stands where the Bastille stood. Pennons were flying around the base of the monument; crowns of immortelles were deposited there by the Guards as they passed, and from thousands of throats came the cry, that scarcely knew cessation, "Vive la République universelle!"

The external unanimity of this manifestation was but the index to the internal unity of feeling which existed among the manifestants in regard to the two chief questions which revolved in the Parisian mind—There shall be a Republican Government, and, The National Guard shall be its army. The certainty of the former was not further assured after the lapse of a fortnight from the general elections; the existence of the latter was already threatened, but the National Guard was determined to maintain them both. Public meetings, in almost every quarter of Paris, addressed by speakers who were not Guards, and by many writers in the Radical and Socialistic Press, wielding considerable influence among the bulk of the population, made the same demands and advocated them passionately. Wild rumours flew about that their beloved city was to be delivered to the Prussians; that Thiers was secretly meditating a Monarchical restoration; that Vinoy, who had helped a Buonaparte to coerce the people, would be base enough to execute a *coup de force* for an Orléanist—against all which plotting, deceit, and treason there was only the National Guard to rely upon—and it was at last beginning to organize itself, to unite its atoms, and to become one immense armed body!

The Statutes of Federation provided for the establishment of a Central Directorate in the following manner: Every battalion was to elect four delegates (including its chief) to represent it; the representatives of all the battalions in any one arrondissement were to constitute themselves into a Council of Legion,—there were thus to be twenty Councils of Legion in Paris. Each of these Councils was to depute four of its members (including at least one chief of battalion) to form part of the Central Directorate, which should thus, when fully constituted, be composed of eighty persons, elected by and representative of the entire force of National Guards in the city. Thus far in theory; in practice it worked out not quite to such perfection, for some

battalions refused to join the federation. These, however, were not numerous, and they did not seriously affect the original plan. The Councils of Legion and Directorate could not all be elected in a day, and it was only by gradual though swift steps that their formation was completed. The Directorate, however, was constituted on or immediately after the 24th of February, and consisted of the provisional Commission which drafted the Statutes of Federation, augmented from day to day by the duly elected representatives from the Councils of Legion. This Directorate took the title of "Comité Central de la Garde Nationale," and began at once its work of organizing and directing. It must not be confounded with the Central Committee of Arrondissements formed after September 4th, but this body, though it continued to exist, found no opportunity for pushing itself into the foreground after the establishment of the new Comité Central of the National Guard, and as most of its principal members became also members of the later and more important committee,[1] it ceased to have much influence or activity.

The manifestations at the Place de la Bastille were continued on February 25th. A new feature was the appearance of many of the regular soldiers and Mobiles, bearing crowns of immortelles, which they deposited at the foot of the column of July—a silent proof of the harmony of thought between the civilian Guards and the soldiers of the line. This agreement was so well understood to exist, that the evidence of it excited no comment; it seemed only natural and brotherly.

The following day was a Sunday—most propitious of days for Parisian demonstrations. The Place de la Bastille was thronged by a huge multitude; the battalions which came to do honour to the Revolution of 1848 were more numerous than ever—one of them displayed a flag on which were the words "The Republic or Death." A police officer thought it his duty to note down the numbers of the battalions which defiled before the column: his action excited the ire of the crowd; he was seized, beaten, bound hand and foot, thrown into the neighbouring canal St. Martin by two chasseurs, his body forced under water

[1] Of these were Babick, Pindy, Lacord, Viard, Henri Fortuné, Ed. Vaillant, Antoine Arnaud, Varlin.

by pikes, and made a target of for stones.[1] Twenty thousand people looked on applausively, though the actual murderers were an insignificant handful!

From assassination to maltreating a few Zouave officers who refused to salute the column, was a step backward; it was taken, nevertheless, with energy. General Vinoy heard of the disturbances—but not before eight o'clock at night could he muster four battalions of infantry to put an end to the disorder, and these four battalions, remaining on duty until midnight, had by that time unlearnt their duty—the Mayor of Paris telegraphed to Vinoy, "On the Place de la Bastille your troops are absolutely mixed with the crowd and fraternising."[2]

The same day witnessed the signing, by Bismarck and Thiers, at Versailles, of the preliminaries of peace betwixt Germany and France. The conditions imposed by the conqueror were exacting in the extreme—a war indemnity of £200,000,000; two provinces, Alsace and Lorraine, to be ceded; Paris to be occupied by 30,000 soldiers; other demands of less import. Thiers, feeling that it would be utterly ruinous to France to attempt to prolong a struggle which had already seriously crippled her, assented to these stern stipulations, and went off to Bordeaux to obtain the sanction of the National Assembly to what he had done. At Paris, the Sunday morning newspapers had published an announcement that the Prussians were to enter the city at midnight. The news was false in regard to such early entrance, though true otherwise. The people were excited—abhorrence of the victorious foreigner grew to fever height; and when Vinoy, in anticipation of the Prussian occupation, caused to be vacated those quarters of the city which were to be occupied by the Germans, the last lingering doubt, as to whether it were really to be, vanished, and the citizens, in whom the patriotism of Frenchmen was immensely augmented by the pride of being Parisians, felt keenly the humiliation which such occupation implied. General Vinoy, in withdrawing his forces from the Passy quarter, operated only upon the men; the artillery, of which there were quantities in the broad Avenue Wagram and the Parc Monceau, he left un-

[1] *Le 18 Mars*, p. 72.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 73, 74.

touched, confident that the Prussians would act honourably, should they by any unforeseen eventuality come across it—for these places were outside the district which was to be occupied.[1] The Parisians had no such faith in their enemy, nor such exact knowledge as to the limits of his peregrinations. The forsaken cannons and mitrailleuses appealed to them with irresistible power. "Shall we allow the hated foreigner to seize these also—these, which we bought with our own money and have guarded with our own lives?" The excitement increased as the night wore on; the new Comité Central of the National Guard, at this juncture largely guided by one Edouard Moreau, met and ordered the tocsin to sound[2] and the cannons to be seized; obedience to the behest was rapid and willing: from all sides the bells sounded an alarm and drums beat for muster; fires were lit in the streets, and from far and wide National Guards poured in in thousands and surrounded the artillery. There were no horses, but, in default thereof, numberless willing hands and arms. Men harnessed themselves to the cannons and pulled, others pushed, and many pieces were thus drawn away. Towards the middle of the night some horses were procured and considerably expedited the work; the ordnance was removed, some to the Place Royale,[3] some to Belleville, to the Buttes Chaumont, to La Villette, and to Montmartre. The last-named place is, as its name indicates, a mount—a huge plot of rising ground terminating in a plateau which is inaccessible at one side, where it looks down upon an immense precipice. It is the highest point in Paris, and therefore overlooks the whole city. To this great height, the cannons taken to that quarter were eventually brought, and a Montmartre Defence Committee was formed to take charge of them. This committee held its sittings at the top of the mount, Rue des Rosiers No. 6, and at once directed trenches to be dug round the mount and fortifications to be begun. The National Guards at this place were not unanimous—one battalion was anxious and fearful at the turn events were taking, and wished to render back the cannons: all that it attained was a reprimand from the newly formed but powerful Comité Central.

[1] *Le* 18 *Mars*, p. 74. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 75. [3] Now Place Vosges.

The same night of the 26–27th the prison of Ste. Pélagie was attacked by a column of National Guards, and Vermorel, Brunel, and Piazza, whose arrests have been recounted, were released. Profound agitation reigned in Paris until daybreak, but it then somewhat subsided, the anticipated invasion of the German army not having occurred.

After daybreak, the cannons that remained in the Parc Monceau and neighbourhood were removed by Vinoy to the Luxembourg, at the south side of the river. Vinoy issued an appeal to the wisdom of the people; Thiers also appealed to them to preserve their dignity and order—but of what use were mere appeals in the face of national misfortunes, national humiliations, national sacrifices? The citizen Guards of Paris had utterly lost faith in their rulers, and felt that they must rely on themselves, and must prepare for any emergency, whether to fight the hated Prussians or other foe! Armed they were, cannons they had now got, munitions of war they were getting and would get. Stolen were they? Is it theft to take for the national use, or even the municipal use, that which has been stored up for the national or municipal benefit? The National Guards thought not—thought they had a perfect right to whatever ammunition they could secure, and they took all that came in their way. This 27th February they surrounded General Callier in the Panthéon quarter, and made themselves masters of three million cartridges.[1] Another general officer, Admiral Saisset, having asked whether he could rely upon certain Belleville battalions that were nominally under his command, was answered by them, "We act only according to the instructions of the Comité Central,"[2] and they forthwith took possession of the powder magazines, which Saisset had been unable to leave under other guard. The Minister of Marine, in writing to the commander of the Pépinière barracks, where were a number of marines, concerning whom an attempt to seduce them from their duty had been made, had no option but to say, "I have no force to dispose of."[3] There was but one effective force in Paris—the National Guards, and they gave allegiance only to their own Comité Central.

[1] *Le 18 Mars*, p. 79. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 81. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 80.

At Belleville the agitation was increased by the facility with which the powder magazines had been secured. The people there became somewhat reckless—cut the telegraph wires and insulted some officers of a neighbouring district. These things demanded a vigorous chastisement, but the authorities were too weak to do aught but repress their feelings, and withdraw their few troops entirely away, so that Belleville and adjacent Ménilmontant on the 28th February were left wholly to the care of the National Guards.[1]

The Prussian occupation of Paris was fixed to take place on March 1st, and was to cover only a portion of the western district, north bank of the Seine, from the fortifications to the Place de la Concorde. Its sole object was to parade a victorious army in the capital of the conquered nation—to dispel the proud boast of the Parisians that their city was "sacred to the barbarians." The Comité Central had to decide what the conduct of the National Guards should be in actual presence of the enemy. It decided to counsel a quiet and dignified bearing—a decision undoubtedly dictated by the knowledge that any other attitude would procure a prompt and exemplary chastisement from their conqueror. The Comité Central caused placards[2] to be posted on the walls notifying its desires. Other placards, breathing intense hostility to the Germans, and loading them with abuse, also appeared, but they were without influence, the people generally being animated by the same prudent considerations as the Comité Central.

The day of the enemy's entrance was a day of general mourning. Public edifices, shops and cafés were closed, newspapers were not issued, windows were hung with black flags or the tricolour flag with black crape, and the statues in the Place de la Concorde were covered with black veils. Active life in the vicinity of the sphere of occupation was suspended. The German troops, 30,000 in number, commenced to enter the city at 11 a.m., and marched leisurely and with brilliant appanage down the great avenues of the Grande Armée and the Champs Elysées,

[1] *Le* 18 *Mars*, p. 82.

[2] Signed by twenty-three members, thirteen of whom were Assi, Billioray, Babick, C. Dupont, Varlin, Mortier, Lavalette, F. Jourde, Ch. Lullier, Blanchet, H. Géresme, Viard, Ant. Arnaud.

quartered themselves with deliberation and heeded not the scowls and unconcealed detestation which were visible on the faces of the natives. There they were to remain until such time as the National Assembly at Bordeaux sanctioned the preliminaries of peace which had been arranged between Bismarck and Thiers. Fortunately for the Parisians, on the same day as that of the occupation, the Assembly decided by 546 votes against 107, to accept the terms to which Thiers had agreed. Ratification of the peace proposals by the Emperor of Germany took place on the 2nd March, and on the 3rd the German troops evacuated Paris. Several of the Paris deputies, considering the National Assembly unworthy of the French nation in having acceded to such humiliating conditions of peace, resigned their mandates as deputies and presently returned to Paris. Of these "démissionnaires" were Rochefort, Ranc, Malon, Tridon, and Cournet.

The 1st of March was an important day for the Comité Central, inasmuch as its internal organization underwent a double modification, the first and simplest being a fusion with the International Association, signified by the admission into its midst of four members of the International who had been specially deputed by the latter body for the purpose.[1] There were, however, at least five persons who bore this dual relationship already, their names being Assi, Babick, Jourde, Pindy, and Varlin. The Comité Central usually held its sittings at the same address as the International, Place de la Corderie, even as the Central Committee of the twenty arrondissements had done. It is impossible, therefore, to doubt the close intimacy and connection existing between these bodies. The International, at this juncture, was not so avowedly militant as the Comité Central; but Varlin, in the former body, energetically declared the necessity for its members to be elected by the Councils of Legion to the Comité Central,[2] and his words commanded the approbation of a large majority of his hearers.

The second modification the Comité Central underwent was the inclusion within it of officers of the National Guard of higher grade than chief of battalion. Many of these higher

[1] *Le 18 Mars* (second part), p. 154. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 153.

officers had been appointed by the Government, and all belonged to a social status above that of the existing members, for which reasons the Comité Central would have preferred to have had nothing to do with them. Policy directed otherwise. These higher officers also had a grievance against the Government, owing to their promised pay not being forthcoming. Repeated representations to Picard, the minister who had to deal with the matter, eliciting no reply of a satisfactory nature, some of the officers published in the papers a request for all their colleagues to meet them on March 1st, in order to arrange for united action; which meeting was duly held. The name which this combination of officers took to itself was that of the "Comité Fédéral Républicain"; one Count Raoul du Bisson was its head. The jealousy of the Comité Central was aroused by the appearance of another Committee of National Guard officers, and it sent to the latter three delegates—Arnold, Bergeret, and Viard—to demonstrate the inadvisability of there being two directorates and the necessity for grouping all their forces into one in view of a common action.[1] The officers agreed, and eventually some of them were incorporated with the Comité Central. By this amalgamation the Republican Federation of the National Guard was finally established. From this title, the National Guards soon came to be spoken of as "Federates"—a term which served to distinguish them from those Guards who had refused to join the Federation.

At a meeting of the Comité Central held on the 3rd of March, the statutes of the Federation were discussed and voted. A resolution was also passed to the effect that, should the seat of government be removed from Bordeaux to any other place than the capital, Paris would immediately constitute itself into an independent republic. This decision was a result of the rumours floating about that the National Assembly purposed transferring itself to Versailles. At the same meeting the following irrational declaration was acclaimed: "The Republic is above universal suffrage."[2] This phrase was doing much service at this epoch, and was being used to justify, to the socialistic mind, the employment of any measure, howsoever

[1] *Le 18 Mars*, p. 100. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 102.

extreme, that might be necessary in order to set up a republic. The phrase is redolent with inconsistency and folly; it has only one logical issue, and that is to establish a republic by force, and a government, so established, would not be a republic but a despotism.

Force, on a limited scale, the Comité Central was even then employing, by continuing to sanction and protect the pillage of ammunition and seizure of war material and stores. Whilst the Germans were entering the city on the 1st of March, the federated Guards in other districts were laboriously bringing cannons and small arms into one of their strongholds beyond the Place de la Bastille—the Faubourg St. Antoine. The 3rd of March, the military position of the Gobelins on the southern side of the river was surprised, its guard attacked and disarmed, and quantities of cartridges removed therefrom. This latter achievement caused M. Picard to issue an *affiche*, in which he stigmatised as "anonymous" the Comité Central, and as "criminal" the acts which it authorized and encouraged.[1] Yet he did not even attempt to repress those criminalities, and therefore only publicly displayed the impotence of the Government. The Comité Central replied at once to his *affiche* by another, wherein it denied its alleged anonymity, and affirmed that it desired to organize the National Guards so as to protect the country better than the regular army had been able to do. This was signed by twenty-five names.[2] The charge of anonymity against the Comité Central was untrue and begot of weakness and indolence. Its members were not men of great note or high positions, but it would have been a perfectly easy matter for the Government to have identified and laid hands on them all. The Government, indeed, was meditating taking some decisive action. The course of events in Paris was known to M. Thiers, and he was already arranging to send reinforcements to General Vinoy. He was anxious to send a force so efficient and numerous that its prestige alone would act upon the insurgent National Guards and induce them to lay down their arms. M. Thiers estimated that for this purpose 40,000

[1] *Le 18 Mars*, p. 87.

[2] Including Arnold, Bergeret, Courty, Henri Fortuné, Lacord, Lavalette, Ostyn, Pindy, Varlin, and Viard.

men would be required. Thirty-six thousand were already *en route* for Versailles, whilst the National Assembly, which would presently transfer itself there, so as to be near Paris, would be accompanied by other 6,000 men.

M. Jules Favre, the principal member of the Government at Paris, was now alarmed at the power of the National Guards, and at the fact that they were not obedient to the Government, but rather arrayed against it. He called from Bordeaux those deputies who were also mayors of arrondissements in Paris, and held a meeting at which they, with the other mayors and adjuncts, were present. The mayors who were also deputies were MM. Tirard, Clémenceau, and Arnaud de l'Ariége. These gentlemen, from the dispatches they had received, expected to find the city in open insurrection, and were astonished to discover no signs of trouble and the streets remarkably tranquil. "The tranquillity is only apparent," said Favre; "one cannot longer allow cannons to be moved about the streets." Clémenceau thought the situation was not so grave as the Minister imagined; he had been to the *Buttes Montmartre*—the arrondissement of which he was mayor—and had there found the National Guards tired of looking after their cannons and only too willing to give them up. Another mayor, M. Vautrain, thought the danger lay not in the cannons, but in the Comité Central. "Take the bull by the horns," he suggested, "and immediately arrest the Comité Central." A giant, deprived at one stroke of its head, is suddenly rendered strengthless: so would the National Guards have been, had their entire directorate, by one swift blow, been removed. The advice of M. Vautrain was not approved; it was too energetic for the feeble-minded counsellors to encompass. They decided to retake the cannons by smooth words (*à l'amiable*), and M. Clémenceau, on his own suggestion, was to be the plausible negotiator with the Comité Central.[1]

Since the resignation of General Clément Thomas, the National Guards had been without a nominal Commander-in-Chief. Acting on their own declaration that they had the right to elect all their officers, from the highest to the lowest, the Guards had, on February 28th, elected one Dassas, a member of

[1] *Le* 18 *Mars*, pp. 110–112.

the Comité Central, to the vacant post of Commander-in-Chief—an appointment which the Government ignored, and which Dassas failed in any way to justify. The officer selected eventually by the Government to fill this invidious position was General d'Aurelle de Paladines, who, in November, had gained the victory over the Germans at Coulmiers. He arrived in Paris and took up the duties of Commander-in-Chief on the 3rd of March, and Jules Ferry, the central mayor, thought there was no longer any peril to fear.[1] D'Aurelle himself, however, speedily perceived that the situation was critical, that few battalions could be relied upon, that the bulk of the officers ranked themselves with their men, and that his appointment was scarcely anywhere favoured, and amongst the socialistic press was violently denounced and repudiated. On March 6th he was told that the National Guards elected their own chiefs, and that, as he was not elected by them, they would not recognise his authority. Thus was D'Aurelle as powerless as Vinoy or the Ministers.

That the Government was reduced to such state of impotency was largely its own fault. Deep and widespread causes of dissatisfaction had existed, and continued to exist, which the nominal authorities had utterly disregarded, or had displayed a childish incapacity to deal with. The wave of indignation which the capitulation of Paris and the abject conditions of peace had set in motion, had far from spent its force, whilst the problem of how to restore the dislocated and almost inanimate trade of the capital was present with increased complexity, and received grossly inadequate and improper treatment. The stoppage of the National Guards' pay, which, though not carried out, hung menacingly over them, was announced long before any number of the citizen soldiers could have obtained employment—now, as a direct consequence, instead of the Guards voluntarily relinquishing their martial profession and returning by degrees to their accustomed businesses, consonant with the gradual revival of trade, they had, as a body, refused to disband, and, by so doing, kept commerce and manufacture still stagnant. Further trouble was threatening from the *propriétaires*, or

[1] *Le 18 Mars*, p. 106.

landlords, of Paris, who, during the siege, had had to defer the collection of their rents, and who were now endeavouring to obtain them. Their worrying action was comparatively fruitless to themselves, but it served further to embitter the hapless tenants against all established Authority, under cover of which august name the propriétaires made their procedure.

The cowardice which General Trochu and colleagues had shown on the day of the 31st October, and their incapacity in the conduct of the National Defence and in the maintenance of order, had been the original causes of the present indiscipline which characterized the National Guards, whilst the abandonment of the cannons near the quarter that was to be occupied by the Prussian army was a great oversight, even had it not resulted in any unforeseen events. A further want of insight and elementary prudence was manifested by the Government so late as March 7th, when the acute position of affairs in Paris could no longer be doubted. The Minister of War at Bordeaux issued a decree disbanding all the Mobile Guards throughout the country;[1] these Mobiles, consisting of peasants and provincial workmen, were mostly steady and reliable men, and their assistance in restoring order at Paris would have been invaluable. However, the decree goes forth, and the Mobiles, anxious to return to their homes, immediately seize the opportunity and go. On the other hand, the National Guards at Paris were being reinforced daily by various elements, some of which were not of high repute. Disbanded soldiers, Garibaldians, Franc-tireurs, and others, who had no claims upon them elsewhere, made for the capital; adventurers and various revolutionary birds of passage, scenting excitement from afar, also flocked thither from all nations.

The Government at Paris issued, on March 8th, a proclamation exposing the gravity of the situation there, and making an appeal to the wisdom and dignity of the people, whom it implored to profit by the terrible lesson taught by recent events, and to seek safety in knowing and respecting their duty. On the 10th the National Assembly held its last meeting at Bordeaux prior to re-uniting at Versailles ten days later.

[1] *Le 18 Mars*, p. 113.

Strong representations made by M. Louis Blanc, a prominent Republican deputy, and by other Republicans, in favour of the Assembly returning to Paris, were futile. The moral cowardice which had been so notable in the Republican Ministers afflicted the Monarchical Chamber also. Its decision was regarded at Paris as a direct and intentional insult to the capital—an additional humiliation, which was the more keenly felt because it came voluntarily from their own countrymen and was undeserved. The radical and socialistic press of Paris raised a hue and cry against the monarchical deputies, and inveighed against them to the fullest extent of the writers' imaginations. Condemnation of the political opinions held by the rural deputies came forth freely; personal invectives and epithets were not wanting—amongst other things, the deputies were called farm-servants, cowboys, beasts, idiots. M. Rochefort, in his journal, the *Mot d'Ordre*, stigmatised them as "*d'exhumés*" (exhumed remains) "of all the monarchies, condemned to found a republic," and, further on, gave a grandiloquent eulogy on the Parisians, to the following effect: "The people of Paris is the most enlightened of all peoples; it has the consciousness of its moral value, knowing that when it speaks the world inclines itself to listen, and that when it marches the world rouses itself to follow."[1] The vituperations of M. Rochefort and of several press writers of like or lower stamp, were suddenly cut short by General Vinoy, who, on March 11th, suspended the following papers: *Le Mot d'Ordre* (Rochefort); *Cri du Peuple* (Jules Vallès); *Le Vengeur* (Félix Pyat); *Le Père Duchêne* (Vermesch and Alphonse Humbert); *La Bouche de Fer* (Paschal Grousset); and *La Caricature* (anonymous). These papers had been incessant in attacking the Government and in advocating revolutionary measures. Simultaneously, a decree was issued again closing the clubs; but this decree was even less efficacious than that issued in January, for the members of the clubs met outside their premises in large numbers, held meetings, and gave inflammatory speeches practically the same as before.[2]

This period in March was also notable for the decision being announced of the Military Court which had had to judge the

[1] *Le 18 Mars*, pp. 119, 120. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 124.

chief actors in the affair of the 31st October, and also those implicated in the affair of the 22nd January. Events had moved apace since these "affairs" happened—so the Military adjudicators thought:[1] there was no need to punish any of the arrested persons, and they were, without exception, liberated; only those few who had avoided arrest were condemned, by default, to various penalties, among them being Blanqui and Flourens, who were each sentenced to death. Blanqui was at the time ill at Cahors, but he was presently arrested and kept in a fortress. Flourens, who had for a long while been in partial concealment, had recently emerged therefrom, secure in the demagogic strongholds of Montmartre and Belleville from any attempt at arrest. Both he and Blanqui issued red placards protesting against the suspension of the six newspapers, openly inciting to revolt, and appealing to the regular army to desert; these placards could only be pulled down in a few places where the Government had a sufficient following to permit of such a course being adopted.[3]

The incitement to the regular soldiers to desert was even more serious than the federated Guards' own rebellion. The Federates were conscious of their own imposing numbers, and knew that they had but one antagonist to fear—the regular army. Overtures to it had from time to time been made in an unostentatious way, but this appeal of Flourens and Blanqui was the first public intimation of the Socialists' design. The billetting of the disbanded soldiers upon the populace had thrown many of them into the revolutionary camp, and even officers, under the spell of the profound dissatisfaction and national humiliation which universally prevailed, cast aside their sworn allegiance and made common cause with the Comité Central. These additions of trained officers and disciplined men were of great value to the Federates, serving to mould the latter into a better fighting form and providing a leverage against the Government and an example of desertion for others to follow.

There could be now no doubt that the Comité Central had become the supreme power in Paris. The obedience to it of

[1] *Actes*, t. i. p. 248.

[2] Including Lefrançais and Sérizier. Vesinier and Ranvier had been released on parole, on January 10th.

[3] *Le 18 Mars*, p. 125.

the federated Guards was complete and enthusiastic. A meeting held on March 15th at the Vauxhall, at which 2,500 delegates, representing 215 battalions, were present, testified at once to its unique position and to the unanimity of the huge army which it swayed. At this meeting the fusion with the officers' Federation was publicly proclaimed to be complete; revised statutes were passed and general officers of the federate Guards appointed. Garibaldi, who had done his utmost for the French cause in the late war, and had received thankless treatment at the hands of the Bordeaux National Assembly, was elected General-in-Chief; he never accepted the appointment, nor had anything to do with the events in Paris. Charles Lullier (naval lieutenant), who greatly impressed the meeting by his eloquence, was appointed colonel of artillery; and Eudes, Duval, Lucien Henry and others, chiefs of legion. This Henry, though only twenty-one years of age, had become noted by his open defiance of the Governmental authorities in the 14th arrondissement, the federates of which had elected him their chief.

Meanwhile the question of the cannons at Montmartre and elsewhere remained unsettled, despite the amiable endeavours of M. Clémenceau with the Comité Central. On March 10th General d'Aurelle had sent envoys to Montmartre, he having been informed that the cannons would be surrendered to them. The envoys, however, were politely told to call again the next day, when the cannons would be given up. The next day they went again, with their teams of horses all ready, nothing doubting; but the cannons were not relinquished, and the horses were kept uselessly waiting all day. M. Thiers arrived at Paris on the 15th, and immediately set himself to solve this question—it was already become a national one. Financiers told him that Europe would not lend France the money she would require to pay Prussia with unless these cannons were in the safe custody of the State.[1] Merchants and manufacturers said it was impossible to do any work until the cannons were removed from the streets. The cannons!—they superseded all other matters now.

Thiers entered at first into friendly conversation with those

[1] *Le 18 Mars*, p. 130.

who retained the cannons—some were willing to return them, others refused; betwixt the two nothing could be done. The next day, the 16th, he again made friendly overtures to attain his object, but was again unsuccessful. At the Place Royale,[1] near the Place de la Bastille, he sent a small body of mounted Gardes de Paris to surprise the federates and secure the cannons there held; but the force was insufficient for the purpose, and the only result of the attempt was to cause the cannons to be withdrawn further eastward to Rue Basfroi, where they were less likely to be surprised or attacked.[2]

Thiers now resolved to immediately retake the cannons by force. He consulted his ministers, but from their puerile intellects it was hopeless to obtain anything decisive. They wished still to temporise with the federates, but the stronger will of the Chief of the Executive Power presently overcame their diffidence, and they assented to his project.[3] This was on March 17th. The federated Guards were held in such little confidence that they were not made aware of what was to be done; as an enemy, they were to be surprised. Neither were the mayors and adjuncts of the twenty arrondissements informed of the meditated attack—it was to be a purely military affair, and the utmost secrecy was observed in making the preparations for it. General d'Aurelle, however, without giving any intimation as to the Government's intentions, received into his house at 11 p.m. the chiefs of about thirty battalions of Guards which were thought to be loyal, and questioned them as to what the conduct of their men would probably be in the event of a struggle for the possession of the cannons taking place. Without exception these officers gave practically one reply, "The National Guards will never fight against the National Guards."[4] There remained therefore only the small force of regulars with which to carry out the undertaking.

The 12,000 soldiers which the terms of the capitulation permitted to remain armed in Paris were not at that moment at command. When the Prussians terminated their brief occupation of the city, they also vacated the six forts situated on the south bank of the Seine—Forts Mont Valérien, Issy, Vanves,

[1] Now Place des Vosges.
[2] *Le* 18 *Mars*, p. 131. Lefrançais, p. 136.
[3] *Le* 18 *Mars*, p. 131.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 135.

Montrouge, Bicêtre, and Ivry—and these General Vinoy had garrisoned out of his 12,000 men. He had also apportioned several companies to act as guards to various columns of disarmed soldiers, which had constituted a menace and encumbrance to Paris and had been sent away from the feverish and unsettled capital. Vinoy's original force of regulars was thus very much reduced. He had, however, received some reinforcements from the provinces of troops that had been formed only during the late war, and which could not therefore be called properly seasoned; they were designated "*de marche*," in contradistinction to "*de ligne*," the latter being older troops; also, in the emergency, some of the disarmed soldiers still in Paris were hastily rearmed and served to augment his small army.

The military execution of Thiers' resolve was confided to Vinoy, and the chief feature of the proposed attack was that it was to be made about four o'clock on the following morning—the 18th—that hour having been well chosen as being the most likely one for finding the federates who were guarding the cannons wearied and tired with their night's watching.[1]

As the French Government could do nothing without a verbose proclamation, one was naturally drawn up and sent to the printers. A summary of its contents will be given at the point where the Parisian public becomes acquainted with it.

The number of pieces of ordnance of all kinds which the National Guards had in their possession was 417[2]—a formidable total; two-fifths of the number—171[3]—were on the Buttes Montmartre; another two-fifths were distributed through La Chapelle, the Buttes Chaumont, Belleville, and Ménilmontant, these places being contiguous and forming together a closely knit area of about four square miles; the remaining fifth was at Rue Basfroi—a locality not far removed from Ménilmontant. All these districts were inhabited and surrounded by a working-class population.

[1] *Le 18 Mars*, p. 135. [2] *La Vérité*, p. 240.
[3] *Rapport d'ensemble*, p. 18.

CHAPTER VIII

THE 18TH MARCH, 1871 [1]

AT 2 a.m., in the darkness and silence of the night, the Government forces were marched off on their mission. The Place de la Bastille—centre for manifestations and riots—was first filled with some thousands of troops, to prevent at that spot any disorderly assemblage. Near by, in Rue Basfroi, sat throughout the night the Comité Central,[2] in ignorance of the proceedings that were in progress for the recovery of the cannons. Ménilmontant, Belleville, the Buttes Chaumont, were all in turn occupied by the Government troops, and the cannons thereat taken possession of without difficulty: the attacking force arrived so unexpectedly and was so preponderantly stronger than the small companies of federates that had been left to guard the artillery. Bill-posters accompanied the soldiers and pasted up on the walls copies of the Government proclamation.

Montmartre, which Generals Susbielle and Lecomte were deputed to seize, fell, as the other districts, an easy prey to Vinoy's admirable tactics. At this place a cordon of troops was first drawn round the mount, and companies of the 88th régiment de marche were told off to guard all the entrances thereto. Then two columns of infantry, each of about 340 men, Lecomte at their head, wended their way to the two plateaus of the mount. A sudden rush was made upon the federates who guarded the cannons—a slight resistance met with—a few shots exchanged, then all was over, the position

[1] To save a multiplicity of references, it may at once be stated that "*Le 18 Mars*," pp. 133–187, forms the principal authority for the facts in this chapter; where information has been drawn from other sources, they will be notified in the usual way.

[2] *La Commune de Paris*, par St. Pourille, dit Blanchet, pp. 9, 31.

was taken, the federates made prisoners, and a more important capture effected in the persons of several members of the local defence committee with their papers. The latter prisoners were at once enclosed in the house, No. 6, Rue des Rosiers, which, only the day before, had been the quarters of the Comité Central.

Couriers were at once despatched to the Government, announcing the complete success of the enterprise, and Lecomte simply awaited the arrival of the necessary teams of horses to come away with his coveted gains. It was then five o'clock. The shots that had been fired awoke the slumbering denizens of Montmartre; they arose, formed groups in the streets, perceived the blow which the Government had struck, and perused by the dawning light Thiers' proclamation addressed to the inhabitants of Paris. This document reasoned with the people, told them they were deceived by the Comité Central, which gave out that the Republic was in danger, but it was its action alone which endangered it; called upon the good to separate from the bad, and finally warned them of the consequences that would ensue if they disregarded that appeal, for force would be employed without a day's delay to procure a complete re-establishment of order. Could reasoning only be made mathematically demonstrable! It would be idle to say that the proclamation had any of the desired effect upon its readers; the exhibition of force which accompanied it was of easier assimilation, and the inference *it* contained to the Parisians was that the Government meditated a *coup d'état*—that the people were again to be subjugated under an iron rule, and that they were being deceived and tricked, not by the Comité Central, but by Thiers.

Six o'clock arrived, and with it broad daylight. The teams of horses not having appeared, General Lecomte ordered some of the cannons to be removed with what few horses he had. This was done, the increasing crowd retarding rather than assisting the operation. Meanwhile, the Comité Central had learnt what had occurred, and one of their number, Blanchet, caused drums to be beat and the alarm bells sounded.[1] The

[1] *Ibid.*

federate Guards turned out of their beds and assembled in the streets, where also were numbers of women and children. All thronged to Montmartre, and by seven o'clock an immense crowd had assembled there at the bottom of the hill, surrounding and impeding the cordon of soldiers and rendering the further removal of cannons almost an impossibility. The women, afraid at first to approach too near the armed cordon, became bolder by degrees, and eventually spoke to the troops—not in anger, but considerately, with the astuteness of diplomats. They must be hungry—had they breakfasted? Of course not, it was only seven o'clock. Nevertheless, the authorities were charged with starving the soldiers, and, to show that the reproach was not an empty phrase, practical measures were taken by the populace to feed them. Fed they were—haphazard, be it; but the soldier was hungry, and tired of waiting with arms in hand; he considered, at the moment, not the ceremony of eating so long as there was something to eat. Bread, meat, and wine were brought out by hundreds of thoughtful women, and the soldiers became friendly and affable under the influence of the kindly attention shown to them.

On the top of the mount a little altercation was proceeding betwixt M. Clémenceau, the mayor of Montmartre, and General Lecomte, relative to the former's wish that one of the federates who had been wounded when the surprise was made, should be removed to a hospital. Clémenceau's motive was doubtless humane, but to transport a wounded and blood-besmeared Guard through the crowded streets would have been the height of folly at that juncture. The general prohibited such removal, more especially as an army doctor was attending the man. Then Lecomte interrogates the mayor: "What is the meaning of all that noise I hear below?" "That," answers Clémenceau, "proceeds only from the men of order, who are disposed to aid in the removal of the cannons; I will answer for the tranquillity of my arrondissement." Lecomte was reassured by these words, and Clémenceau proceeded to his mairie.

The time passed, and still the teams of artillery horses came not. Some one, there anent, had bungled; orders had been at fault or their execution dilatory. Had the teams closely followed the troops, as they should have done, the entire

business might have been accomplished by daybreak, whereas eight o'clock had arrived and the erewhile facile task had become, owing to the crowded and congested thoroughfares, most arduous and of uncertain termination. The broad Boulevard de Rochechouart glistened with the bright bayonets of federate battalions; the Place St. Pierre, bounded on three sides by high, dirty-looking houses and on the fourth by the abruptly rising mount, was surging and overflowing with humanity—soldiers, civilians, women and children, all intermingled and nigh inextricable. Presently, the throng began to climb up the hill by every conceivable way, over gardens, railings, houses, slopes. General Lecomte perceived the movement, and knew not quite what to think of it. One of his commandants, Poussargues, demanded several times the order to fire upon the crowd, but—"No! let them be forced back at the bayonet's point." This was difficult to do; the crowd pressed so closely that the bayonets could not be brought to position. The endeavour to carry out the order was seen by the populace, and the women at once cried out, "Would you fire upon us and our children?" The soldiers hesitated; one of their officers, revolver in hand, threatened them; he was surrounded by the women, several of his men broke away from their ranks and openly deserted, whilst the others reversed their guns and lifted the butt ends into the air in token of sympathy with the people.

Now without hindrance the latter clambered up the hill from all points of the compass, and arrived on the top plateau in swarms, so that the general's troops were paralysed and he himself was enveloped in the flowing tide. He endeavoured to withdraw with his staff, but it was impossible; he was insulted, his soldiers turned against and arrested him, and he was carried rather than conducted to No. 6, Rue des Rosiers, where the prisoners which he had made some hours before were located; they were liberated, and he was installed for a few minutes in their place. Upon his refusal to sign an order for the troops to retire,[1] he was escorted by the federate Guards to a public dancing-hall a little way from the bottom of the hill, the Château Rouge in Rue Clignancourt, and there, where there was

[1] *Rapport d'ensemble*, p. 20. De la Brugère, p. 380.

a strong muster of citizen Guards, he was detained as a prisoner. Several of his officers were likewise sent there and guarded, the captain in charge of that establishment and of the prisoners being one Simon Mayer.

The multitudes on the top of the hill, flushed with their success in winning over the Government troops to their side, and excited by their further achievements in the arrest of Lecomte and his officers, were now maddened by the sight of the wounded man whom Clémenceau had wished to remove—no further proof was needed to convince them that Lecomte had intended to fire upon and decimate them. Two of his soldiers, recognised to have been policemen under the Emperor Napoleon, were beaten, lacerated, and left for dead in the Rue des Rosiers. Two horses belonging to Lecomte's staff, during the latter's retreat, stumbled and fell; they were instantly pounced upon by the crowd, the living flesh torn and cut off with sabres, bayonets, knives, and fingers, and straightway eaten, bloody and warm though it was: in a few minutes there remained only two skeleton-like carcases.

Elsewhere at Montmartre, similar signs of fraternization betwixt the troops and the citizens were witnessed. The troops heeded not their officers' orders, raised the butt ends of their guns in the air, and cried, "Vive la garde nationale!" whilst the federates applauded vociferously, and responded by "Vive la ligne!" Other two officers of the 88th régiment de marche were arrested and confined by their men in a shop on the Boulevard Rochechouart, and, not far away—Rue Houdon—a captain of artillery was mortally wounded as a result of attempting to secure obedience to his commands. At the Tower Solferino, the usual exchange of fraternal greeting was followed by ominous cries of "Down with Vinoy!" and "Down with Thiers!" Fraught with even more terrible significance was the fact that from the Boulevard Rochechouart to the new College Chaptal, barricades were commenced, intercepting the issue of all the streets from which Government troops might come.

The Comité Central had not been idle. Though the Government action had come upon it by surprise, it was resolved to hold fast to the cannons, and it had already sent Bergeret, one of its members, to organize the federates of Montmartre, and Varlin to do likewise in the adjacent Batignolles, with the object of

nullifying the Government attempt. The method adopted was not an open resistance to the troops, but an endeavour to win them over to their own side, and thus to gain their end without bloodshed or great difficulty. The success attending the Comité's design was as complete as was the failure of the Government's.

It was nine o'clock when General Susbielle, part of whose men had also deserted, withdrew from Montmartre, with his staff and those who remained faithful. It was evident to him and to General Vinoy that, with such wholesale defections, and the consequent demoralization of the army, it would be useless to persevere with their project that day, and that as quickly as possible those soldiers who still remained loyal should be called away from the infectious area, lest they also fell a prey to the prevailing disorder. This was at once done as far as it was practicable, but some companies could not be communicated with and many others had already joined the citizen ranks. All troops that could be withdrawn were marched to the south bank of the Seine and concentrated on the Champs de Mars and at the Military School which faces thereto. Three members of the Comité Central who had been arrested early in the morning at Montmartre—Viard, Chouteau, and Prudhomme[1]—were incarcerated in the depôt adjoining the Prefecture of Police. The Government, inert and blind as ever, could only issue a proclamation which was worse than useless, for it was never read by the Parisians that day, and it consumed time which might have been better employed.

The streets and heights of Montmartre continued to be crowded with the excited populace, and the morning passed swiftly away amid the ferocious enthusiasm, the eating and drinking, the raising of barricades, and the occasional further arrests of officers and of some Government troops whose ideas of duty were firm and would not yield to the solicitations of the federates. Clémenceau, who had learnt of the arrests, went to the Château Rouge to see about the principal prisoners, General Lecomte in particular. The mayor could do naught in regard to setting them at liberty, but he enjoined upon Captain Mayer

[1] Du Camp, t. i. p. 63.

to attend to their wants and see to their safety, which the latter promised to do. The injunction was needed, for the later-arrived prisoners had been accompanied by angry, vociferating crowds, and the Château Rouge was surrounded by violent men and enraged women, who attempted every now and again to force an entrance so as to get at the objects of their hatred. The prisoners were kept waiting for the arrival of the Comité Central, which should judge them; but the Comité came not, and no one seemed to know where it was, nor when it would come.

Towards two o'clock, a line of federated Guards with bayonets fixed was drawn up in the garden of the Château Rouge, and Captain Mayer came to inform the officer-prisoners—all of whom, excepting Lecomte, were together—that he had orders to send them to the Rue des Rosiers, where sat the Comité before which they were to be brought. Captain Mayer did not inform them of the fact that the written order he had received was delivered to him by a captain of National Guards whom he knew not, that the signatures upon it were undecipherable, and that the only recognisable elements of authority about it were a seal and a printed title of a Committee—which, however, he had no personal knowledge of. Nevertheless, to this unknown captain, and upon this unknown authority, he delivered the prisoners. Lecomte, calm and with a firm and dignified step, joined the other officers, who saluted him and to whom he returned the salute. The convoy of Guards insulted and threatened their prisoners; the streets through which they passed were thronged with people, who uttered imprecations and menaces upon them, and made various efforts to get hold of them—efforts which were only repulsed by the strenuous and courageous resistance of the officers of the convoy. Painfully and slowly they climbed up the hill Montmartre. A thick fog enveloped it, but the crowd pressed everywhere and both saw and was seen, and the tigress-like women clenched their fists before the eyes of the unhappy prisoners, hurled oaths and insults upon them, and mercilessly declared that they were about to be killed.

On arrival at No. 6, Rue des Rosiers, the prisoners, eleven in number, were hustled into a small and dark room on the

ground floor, whilst the throng of turbulent and revengeful people crowded the courtyard in front and endeavoured to force an entrance into the house. An old, white-bearded man, a Captain Garcin, with a July decoration[1] upon his breast, who had during the morning displayed a cynical vindictiveness against the prisoners, now came forward to inform them that the Comité would decide upon their fate. Lecomte demanded to see the Comité immediately, and was answered that it was being sought. Meanwhile the clamour and frenzy of the populace abated not, and the officer in charge of the convoy of Guards, knowing that the lives of the prisoners were at stake, made strenuous efforts to protect them from violence.

Still the Comité arrived not, and the people, tired and incensed with waiting, broke the window-bars of the room where the prisoners were, and levelled their guns at them, Lecomte always being singled out as the main object of their hatred. The convoy of federates, to their honour, thrust the guns aside, endeavoured to soften the wrath of the angry populace, and besought them to wait until the Comité arrived. But the crowd was in no mood to wait—it continued to push forward, and the pressure at last broke the window-frame down and opened a way into the room. Furious individuals rushed in, wildly shouting and gesticulating. Some of Lecomte's soldiers of the morning were there; they picked out their general and roughly laid hands upon him. One struck him a blow, exclaiming, "You once gave me thirty days' imprisonment; I shall fire the first shot at you."

Suddenly an uproar and hubbub was heard outside, so great as to overpower even the inside clamour. This was followed by a tremendous jostling in the courtyard, and then, in an instant, there was thrust into the room an old, white-bearded man, in civilian attire, with tall hat. It was General Clément Thomas, lately Commander-in-Chief of the National Guards. He had had no military duties that day, but had come out as a private citizen to see what was transpiring at Montmartre. The action was unwise, for the federates entertained a deep animosity towards him on account of certain adverse reports he

[1] Referring to the Revolution of July, 1830.

had made relative to Flourens' battalions during the siege,[1] and also because of his endeavours to maintain discipline in the ranks. He was speedily recognised at Montmartre by his former subordinates who arrested him at Place Pigalle, took him first to the Château Rouge, and from thence to the Rue des Rosiers, where his arrival was hailed by the excited crowd with delirious joy. To the populace it was a further evidence that they were enacting a patriotic part in constituting themselves a Nemesis for the punishment of all who were or had been arrayed against them.

The fury of the federates became uncontrollably frenzied by this addition to their prey. The convoy officers defended the prisoners with despairing energy, conscious, however, of inability to protect them for long. A red-shirted individual, less fanatical than the majority, jumped on to a wall and harangued the crowd. "Place the generals at liberty: sully not the day by a crime!" Replies from many throats had but one significance: "To death! To death!" Still the red-shirted one persisted. "Institute a court-martial, then, and let them be properly tried;" but the bloodthirsty citizens turned upon the speaker and threatened to treat *him* as a traitor. No words, were they from angel lips, could now restrain the madness of this people, though their mania can be intensified. A federate shouts out, "If we do not shoot them to-day, they will shoot us to-morrow!" The probability of this is apparent: blows and exertions are redoubled, the protecting guard around the two generals is at length beaten down, and the crowd, like a wild beast that has broken loose from its chains, pounces upon the old man Clément Thomas, seizes him by the neck, pushes him, strikes him with fists and with gun ends, until he is hustled and knocked from the room into a garden at the back. Shots are fired upon him at close quarters by several guards and soldiers, each ambitious to be the first to wound him; the blood of the unfortunate general flows freely, though he is still able to stand; he is roughly placed against the wall of the garden, where for an instant he holds himself upright, hat in the right hand and the left hand shielding his face. Then an irregular

[1] *Actes*, t. i. p. 80; t. v. p. 463.

fusillade commences, and he falls with his body doubled up. Not by any chance to leave their victim alive, these human hounds advance and again fire upon the fallen general at close quarters, also kicking him and striking the now lifeless body with the butt ends of their guns.

The noise and the firing told the other prisoners unmistakably what had occurred. The vindictiveness of the people had been directed mainly against the generals, and therefore Lecomte felt sure that he would be the next to suffer. He, however, maintained his calmness, handed over his money to his officer, Poussargues, who was also a prisoner, and gave him some final injunctions in respect to his family. Lecomte then marched with such firmness and dignity before his assassins, that several officers amongst the latter could not refrain from giving him the accustomed military salute, which was acknowledged in due form by the general. Scarcely had he gone a few paces in the garden when a shot from behind brought him to his knees—he was raised and half carried to where the remains of Clément Thomas lay. At this point a dozen shots were fired into him—fired, as in Thomas's case, irregularly, and without the slightest pretence of judicial form or of any deliberate procedure whatever. Lecomte's body was also beaten and mutilated, and useless shots fired into it.

It was then half-past five.

Drunken with blood and wine, passionate with hate, delirious with their achievements, mad with the moment's yield, and knowing neither past nor future, these biped brutes, in pandemoniacal array, shrieking and shouting, men, women, and children confusedly joined together, many half-nude, and all entirely possessed with an uncontrollable hellish frenzy, danced round the dead bodies of their victims a dance of victory. Humanity has not yet become spiritualised—it is eminently of a material and brutish substance, and from time to time requires the chastisement which brutes receive.

It had been the most violent members of the crowd who had made their way into the garden—the fact was of good augury for the ten prisoners who remained in the house. These anticipated each moment a summons for one or other of them; but it came not, and their guard was still protecting them from

the savage onslaughts of the people. The latter, knowing that the two generals were really murdered, began to be less violent and bloodthirsty; and many federates, both of the convoy and others, who had not actually participated in the assassinations, became uneasy at the crime committed in their midst, which they had tacitly assisted in by not trying to the last extremity to prevent. They were now more than ever anxious to save the lives of the remaining prisoners, and they closed up round them with renewed determination. By six o'clock they had obtained the consent of the mob to remove their prisoners to the Château Rouge, there to await the decision of the Comité Central. This removal was at once effected; on the way, the escort and prisoners were met by M. Clémenceau and Captain Mayer, who were coming to render assistance to the two generals. Their lives Mayer knew to have been in jeopardy, for at half-past four he had gone to the mairie to acquaint Clémenceau with the danger of their position; he had, moreover, obtained from the redoubtable Comité Central an order to set at large all the prisoners. The two generals had already been set free, both from that danger and from all others! For them the double assistance came too late; Clémenceau and Mayer could only proceed to the fateful house and view there the demoniacal scene still going on, whilst the ten prisoners and their escort proceeded to the Château Rouge as to a place of safety. These ten officers were liberated late at night, secretly and separately; the attitude of the populace remained threatening, and it was not without danger that the ten eventually got away from so excited a district.

The rapid spread of the desertions amongst the regular troops, the complete failure of the Government enterprise, and the withdrawal of the soldiers to the south side of the river, came upon the Comité Central with even more startling suddenness than the fact of the attempt to retake the cannons. Its most sanguine ideas had never extended to the imagination of a victory so overwhelming, so speedy, and so easily attained. The magnitude of it at first embarrassed the Comité, and it scarcely knew what to do; but so golden an opportunity for realizing their long-cherished desires for a Commune was not to be let slip, and, therefore, the decision was taken to possess

themselves of the external evidences of power as quickly as possible. Varlin and Bergeret had joined their respective forces at Montmartre, and, as soon as the retreat of the Government troops had left the way clear for them, they descended into the centre of the town and took possession of the Place Vendôme. Charles Lullier, gathering together some federates from various quarters and provided with authority from the Comité Central, made himself ubiquitous during the afternoon and evening, giving instructions, and seizing various public buildings. Most of the edifices on the north bank of the Seine were found already vacated by the Government, and their occupation was a matter of easy accomplishment. The Hôtel de Ville was, however, well guarded, and in its proximity there were extensive barracks which supplied additional soldiers to its defence. The federates were obliged to lay siege to it and await the course of events, neither party caring to precipitate an actual struggle in the absence of precise commands.

The reports of the earlier events of the day, coming one after another to the Government—which sat in permanence, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—proved beyond a doubt to Thiers, Vinoy, and their colleagues, that a new revolution was in progress. To attempt to stem it by declaring that the people were the victims of delusions, was an act at once facile and natural to these resourceless politicians, and thus another proclamation went forth denying the "absurd rumour" which was being propagated, that the Government had meditated a *coup d'état.* This proclamation likewise was unread by the Parisians that day, and to issue it was a most frivolous waste of time.

Thiers, Vinoy, and the War Minister, Le Flô, all old men, and experienced in French revolutions, thought that the safety of the Government and of the Republic demanded an immediate departure both of the ministers and of the loyal troops to Versailles. The other ministers thought that such action was unnecessary, that the insurrection could be mastered without quitting Paris. However, Thiers again prevailed, and at half-past three o'clock, he, accompanied by a strong escort, left the Foreign Office and proceeded to Versailles, having first given emphatic instructions that the other ministers and all the troops were to follow him as soon as possible. The soldiers occupying

the forts south of the river were also to be at once sent to Versailles, for the double purpose of preserving them from contaminating contact with the insurgent troops and of forming a nucleus of the new army which, from that moment, Thiers saw it was of the first necessity to construct.

Thus was Paris at one stroke deprived even of the semblance of a Government, and delivered openly, by a confession of weakness that was beyond contradiction, to whosoever had strength or astuteness enough to seize the dropped reins of authority. The twenty mayors of arrondissements remained, and, after the Government, they ranked as the next legitimate authority; but hitherto they had been scrupulously confined to the municipal duties of their respective districts, and had had no experience of ruling in a body over the whole of Paris. How could they, at a moment's notice, in the midst of confusion, disorder, riot, and bloodshed, take up the comprehensive direction of affairs which those whose duty it was found themselves unable to carry on? Were the mayors collectively a homogeneous and united body, with one amongst them whom without hesitation they could elect as leader? Alas, they were just the reverse of this—a conglomeration gathered together in November, representative of all the various shades of opinion which by any means could be ranked under the generic term Republican. There was even a member of the Comité Central amongst them—Ranvier; another mayor, Delescluze, openly supported that Comité; a third, Clémenceau, was friendly towards it. Many others were as well disposed to it as to the Government. Among the adjuncts, or deputy-mayors, there was a similar lack of experience in the highest department of governing and of diversity in their political faiths. Nevertheless, it was upon these municipal officials, so ill-prepared for such a burden, that the mantle of legitimate authority in Paris had suddenly fallen. They even had had no intimation of the projected retaking of the cannons; and though the defeat of the project and the dilemma of the Government were speedily blazoned throughout the city, it was only towards the close of the day that they could be assembled together to discuss their position and duties. The pacification and obedience of the National Guards being of the first importance and an essential preliminary

to any regular government of the city, it was decided by the mayors to petition Jules Favre, who was still in Paris, to nominate M. Dorian as Mayor of Paris, in place of M. Jules Ferry; Edmond Adam, to the office formerly held by him, of Prefect of Police; and Colonel Langlois, an officer held in deserved general estimation by the National Guards, as Commandant of the latter, in place of General d'Aurelle de Paladines. These appointments, the mayors thought, would conciliate the National Guards and secure a restoration of public order. When these proposals were put before Favre, he, with some warmth, refused to entertain them, though he said he would consult with M. Thiers by telegraph and abide by his decision. The result of this was that Thiers left the matter to his ministers at Paris, and Favre and Picard therefore, hastily and without consulting their colleagues, divested General d'Aurelle of his position and appointed Langlois his successor. The offices of Mayor and Prefect they left untouched.

Whilst the deputation of the mayors had been conferring with Favre, the Hôtel de Ville came to be evacuated by the soldiers, who for some hours had held it against the federates, siege measures. These soldiers had received during the afternoon from Vinoy orders to withdraw from the Hôtel, and from Picard orders not to withdraw, betwixt which conflict of authority the withdrawal was delayed until nine o'clock at night, and was then carried out with some slight bloodshed. M. Ferry, in quitting the place at half-past nine, wrote to the mayors: "The Executive Power withdraws from me all the forces which defended the Hôtel de Ville. I cannot defend it alone, but in the interests of fortune, of the bullion, and of the municipal archives, you must intervene to regularize or modify whatever happens." The mayors received the letter, and some of them gathered together a few battalions of National Guards for the purpose of taking possession of the Hôtel de Ville and holding it on behalf of the Government. It was nearly one o'clock in the morning of the 19th when these battalions arrived before the Hôtel and sent forward a deputation to enter it; but they were too late—the federated Guards were in full possession of the building. The Comité Central had installed itself there at midnight, and the deputation and loyal battalions

had simply to come away crestfallen and checkmated, for any idea of actual fighting between the two sections of the National Guards was utterly out of the question. The first members of the Comité Central to enter into possession of the Municipal Palace were Brunel, who had led the besieging force of federates; Gabriel Ranvier,[1] the mayor of Belleville; and Pindy, Internationalist and carpenter.

By this time most of the public buildings in Paris were occupied by federates and Comité Central delegates. At the Depôt adjoining the Prefecture of Police, the three Comité Central members who had been arrested in the morning were delivered by Lullier.[2]

The Comité Central, controlling as it did over 200,000 citizen soldiers, resisted practically by none, and with the nominal Government in flight, had no difficulty in now considering itself the master of Paris. Possession of the Hôtel de Ville was the visible sign of its exaltation, and obedience to its wishes came easily and naturally from the federates who had voluntarily placed its members at their head. One of its first actions was that usual procedure of new regimes—the release of political prisoners, which was effected, without opposition, during the night.

Thiers' ministers had left the Foreign Office at nine o'clock, being in some doubt as to their safety there. They met, first, in the house of a M. Calmon; subsequently, at midnight, in the Military School, near the Champs du Mars; at both places in secrecy. Though Favre and Picard were severely blamed by their colleagues for the supersession of D'Aurelle by Langlois, the appointment of the latter was acquiesced in, and a messenger sent to inform the mayors of the fact. The mayors had made their rendezvous at the mairie of the 2nd arrondissement, Rue de la Banque. At this place, throughout the night, they assembled, with their adjuncts and various outsiders. Raoul Rigault; Paschal Grousset, journalist, connected with the Victor Noir affair; Cournet, protégé of Delescluze, and Lockroy, a Republican deputy, were there, along with Langlois, when the news arrived of the latter's nomination to the commandantship

[1] Du Camp, t. i. p. 152.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 63.

of the National Guards. Rigault and Grousset, both of them in close intimacy with the Comité Central, declared that the Comité would be delighted with the appointment, and therefore the new Commander, accompanied by Cournet and Grousset, forthwith went to the Hôtel de Ville to receive from the Comité the confirmation of his office, without which it would be chimerical. How Langlois, whose loyalty to the Government was undoubted, hoped to reconcile that loyalty with any sort of allegiance to the Comité Central in the then position of affairs is nigh incomprehensible. His theoretical ideas had overcome the practical; but the Comité, whom he went to see, were not so visionary. They would welcome his appointment, truly, but only on condition that he held it from them, that he entirely deserted the Government and became a federate Commandant. This, Langlois could not assent to, and his commandantship became at once a dead letter. The Comité appointed one of their own adherents to the position; this was Charles Lullier, the marine lieutenant. Lullier was a man of energy and ambition; his intellect was, however, too highly strung: it lacked solidity, and occasionally bordered on lunacy.

During the dark hours of the early morning of the 19th, Favre, Picard, and the other ministers quitted Paris and went to Versailles, not, however, without drawing up still another proclamation, which was as useless as its many predecessors.

CHAPTER IX

PARIS UNDER THE COMITÉ CENTRAL, MARCH 19TH TO 27TH, 1871

THE dawn of Sunday, March 19th, heralded in what proved to be a day of brilliant sunshine, and it needed only this happy conjunction of holy day and beautiful weather to induce the Parisians to crowd into the streets and boulevards, the Champs Elysées and Tuileries Garden, there to bask in the welcome solar radiance and to discuss the events of the previous day and the problems thereby created. The assassination of Generals Lecomte and Thomas were on every tongue, but they provoked wide differences of comment. The partisans of the Government charged the Comité Central with having ordered the murders; the federates maintained that only an act of justice had been committed, whether regularly or irregularly; others again declared that the two generals had by their own imprudences brought their deaths upon themselves. Among the two last-named classes of people there was no regret expressed, — the Government had declared war against the citizens, they said, and its officers had only experienced the last dread penalty of war. The flight of the Government was nowhere approved; considered on the one hand as having selfishly flown from its responsibilities at a critical moment, and on the other as having been chased from power by the irresistible will of public opinion, it lost every atom of claim it ever had to the esteem of its supporters, or of respect—even of that which is given to a fallen foe who has been worthy of one's steel—from its adversaries. Those who still gave their adherence to the Government, did so, not from any regard for it, but from a sense of danger existing in the pretensions and deeds of the Comité Central.

The latter body did not feel absolutely at its ease in the authoritative position it had suddenly jumped into. It had power, certainly, represented by the large army of National Guards whose elect it was; but there were some thousands of other Guards who still adhered to the Government, and there was an exceedingly large section of the Parisian public which the Comité Central could lay no claim to represent. It felt, therefore, that its own powers needed regularising; should it remain at the Hôtel de Ville, it must be by the unmistakable mandate of the entire electoral community. It was an anomaly it dared not contemplate, that it should attempt to rule the city by the immense armed force which it possessed, in disregard of those principles of Election and of Universal Suffrage, the recognition of which, up to that moment, every one of its members, and all its supporters in the Press and elsewhere, had energetically—even vehemently—demanded from the displaced Government. There was also some misgiving in the minds of some members of the Comité as to the possible consequences of their usurpation of authority; the collapse of the Government had been so unexpected and so complete, that they found themselves thrust forward to a degree far beyond their anticipations and beyond what they would have wished, in that illegitimate manner, to go. Notwithstanding all which, the Comité Central was intensely covetous of power, and betwixt this covetousness, the fear of consequences and the devotion to their highly proclaimed principles, are to be found the springs of their actions during the following week.

Early on the Sunday morning the Comité Central issued a proclamation to the people, in which it stated that communal elections were to be held. A second proclamation, addressed to the National Guards, reiterated this statement and added, with an assumed modesty, that, the Government having been got rid of, they—the Comité—had fulfilled the mission with which they had been charged; that it became the duty of the citizens now to elect representatives who should govern the city and establish the veritable Republic, to attain which result was all the recompense they desired; until the elections, the Comité would continue to hold the Hôtel de Ville in the name of the people. A decree followed fixing the day of the elections for Wednesday,

the 22nd. These three documents were all signed by the same persons,—twenty in number.[1]

A fourth and very lengthy document was issued by the Comité Central during the day. It was drawn up with great skill, and was for the purpose of explaining and justifying its deeds in face of the many calumnious reports that were afloat about them. Naturally, the Comité looked at things through its own and not its adversaries' eyes. Here are the salient paragraphs: The Comité Central "is not occult; its members have placed their names to all its *affiches*. If they are obscure, they have not fled from responsibility—and it was great. It has not manufactured disorders, because the National Guard, which has done it the honour to accept its direction, has committed neither excess nor reprisals, and shows itself imposing and strong by the wisdom and moderation of its conduct." The Government, it declares, "has calumniated Paris and set the provinces against it—it has brought against us our brothers of the army— it has wished to force upon you a general-in-chief—it has, by nocturnal attempts, tried to take away our cannons, after we had prevented them from being delivered to the Prussians—it has, finally, decided to snatch from Paris its beloved crown of being the capital of France,"—to all which provocations the Comité Central has preached moderation; "even at the moment when the armed attack commenced, it said to all, 'No aggression, and reply only at the last extremity.'" The Government "has called us assassins: the bloody dirt with which they try to stain our honour is an ignoble infamy. Never a decree of execution has been signed by us; never has the National Guard taken part in the execution of a crime." Finally the Comité Central said to the people personified, "Here is the mandate that you confided to us; at the point where our personal interest commences, our duty ends—do thy will. My master, thou art free. We, obscure for some days, shall re-enter obscure into thy ranks and shall show to the Governments that one can descend with a high head the steps of thy Hôtel de Ville with the certainty

[1] Including Assi, Billioray, Babick, C. Dupont, Varlin, Mortier, Lavalette, F. Jourde, Ch. Lullier, Blanchet, Géresme.

of finding at the bottom the clasp of thy loyal and robust hand."[1]

The Comité Central took without delay various practical measures of importance. It sent delegates to the several abandoned Ministries; Jourde and Varlin in particular to the Ministry of Finances. At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Paschal Grousset, being a man of some intelligence and polish, was installed; at the Ministry of War, Eudes had installed himself; the business of the Prefecture of Police, a place of importance in the midst of social and political disarrangement, was, for the moment, transacted at the Hôtel de Ville by Raoul Rigault and Duval. Thirteen out of the twenty mairies were occupied by federates under Lullier's instructions, and various delegates were placed within them to act as mayors temporarily. The thirteen displaced officials were all antagonistic to the Comité Central. The palace of the Luxembourg was seized by Longuet, and barricades for its defence commenced in Rue Soufflot. The printing office of the Government organ, the *Journal Officiel*, was seized—henceforth that publication shall be an official or semi-official journal of the new rulers of Paris. Gustave Flourens was given a new and important command in the federate army, but for a while had no opportunity for distinguishing himself. Bergeret, in recognition of his services at Montmartre, was made a Chief of Legion, and took the title of "General."

Whilst federate generals were springing into existence, two generals of the regular army were betaking themselves away from the capital. These were Macmahon and Canrobert, Marshals of France, who followed the Government to Versailles as soon as the murders of Generals Thomas and Lecomte became known, appreciating the fact that high military officials ran considerable danger by remaining in Paris. The reality of this danger soon became apparent. Generals Chanzy and Langourian were travelling towards Paris from Tours during the night of the 18th–19th in ignorance of the events that had occurred in the capital. Upon their arrival during the

[1] This was signed by the twenty members of the Comité previously referred to, and also by Ant. Arnaud, Henri Fortuné, G. Arnold, Viard, and another.

Sunday morning they were arrested and taken first to the mairie of the 13th arrondissement, and then to the prison La Santé. On the way to both these places an angry and vociferating crowd accompanied them, and, but for the determined attitude of Léo Meillet, the former adjunct but now self-installed mayor, and of Sérizier, chief of legion of the said arrondissement, Chanzy and his companion would have fared badly at the hands of the excited populace. The prison was really a place of safety for them.

At various places in the city, by order of the Comité Central, barricades and other defensive operations were carried on all day, sight-seers and promenaders being called upon to furnish their quota of labour. Montmartre and Belleville were thus turned into improvised fortresses, and the Place de la Hôtel de Ville was similarly entrenched, and fortified by numerous cannons. The city, as a whole, was remarkably free from disturbance or conflict, but occasionally the Government adherents came into actual collision with the insurgents. In one of these little affrays, Blanchet, member of the Comité Central, was wounded; another member, named Sanglier, was arrested in the Passy quarter—the west end of Paris—the only part of the city where the Government supporters were as strong as or stronger than the federates.

The regular soldiers that had been in Paris, and the Daudel brigade that had manned the six southern forts, were now all concentrated at Versailles, around Thiers, his ministers, and, prospectively, the National Assembly deputies, some of whom were already arrived in preparation for the resumption of the Assembly's sittings on the following day. The loyal National Guards in Paris numbered about 12,000, but they were left without chief, without pay, without orders, without any direction whatever from the fugitive Government, and they consequently possessed no cohesion. The mayors were in a similar position, but, upon the representations of two of them, MM. Tirard and Bonvalet, they obtained from Thiers during the course of the day full powers to govern the city provisionally, and an order on the Bank of France for 50,000 francs wherewith to pay the National Guards who stood aloof from the Federation.[1]

[1] *Le* 18 *Mars*, pp. 182, 183.

A commander-in-chief for the latter was found haphazard in the person of a naval officer, Admiral Saisset, who, entering the Café Helder, and being recognised and acclaimed by the loyal citizens there, was besought by them to place himself at the head of the National Guards—a position of no mean gravity. Saisset assented, but on condition that his appointment should be made by Thiers. Thereupon a delegation of four gentlemen departed at great haste for Versailles, obtained Thiers' sanction to the proposed appointment, hurried back to Paris, and, at ten o'clock at night, acquainted Admiral Saisset therewith.[1]

Notwithstanding the devolution of powers accorded to the mayors by Thiers, these gentlemen knew not what to do; they were assembled in permanence, talked much, and specially nominated MM. Tirard, Dubail, and Héligon to organize the resistance to the Comité Central. About four o'clock in the afternoon the Comité sent to inform them that it was disposed to give up possession of the Hôtel de Ville and the mairies. A deputation of mayors at once went to secure the Hôtel de Ville, only to find that the Comité Central required prior assent to certain conditions. Five hours of lively discussion ensued, and eventually Varlin, Jourde, and Moreau returned with the deputation to the mairie of the 2nd arrondissement, to ask the mayors to make common cause with the Comité Central, the Comité retaining control of the National Guards, whilst the mayors should direct the municipal administration as heretofore, pending the result of the elections that were convoked for the 22nd. To these propositions the mayors refused their concurrence, holding that to give assent to them would be tantamount to recognising the legality of the Comité Central and of its actions—that which they could not, on any account, do. Again an angry and protracted discussion, in the midst of which Jourde passionately declared that the mayors' refusal to co-operate with the Comité Central would entail civil war; and, in that eventuality, if the federates were beaten, they would leave nothing standing upright, but would make of the country a second Poland.[2] Uninfluenced by this threat, the mayors

[1] Delpit, pp. 19–23.

[2] *Le 18 Mars*, p. 195.

would only undertake to lay before the National Assembly at Versailles a project of law which should accord to the National Guards the right to elect all their officers, and should also authorize the election in Paris of that municipal council which had been so often demanded and deferred. The delegates from the Comité Central at last promised to be content with this, and said that they would render the Hôtel de Ville to the mayors the following morning at ten o'clock.

During the day, and again at midnight, General Vinoy had been urging upon Thiers the unwisdom of the evacuation of the southern forts, especially Fort Mont Valérien, which was the largest and strongest of the six, and, moreover, commanded the road from Paris to Versailles. Thiers had concentrated all his available forces around him, and was making strenuous exertions to obtain reinforcements from the provinces, and the return of captured soldiers from the Prussians—all in view of an expected attack from Paris—yet Fort Valérien, the key of the position, was left unoccupied for the federates to seize and by it to protect and secure their march to Versailles, if such they should attempt. The military eye of Vinoy perceived that this fort was a host in itself to whichever party possessed it, and he succeeded in persuading Thiers to reoccupy it, only in time to prevent its occupation by the federates. The Comité Central had thought of it, and on the 20th sent two battalions of federates to garrison it, but they were too late; earlier in the day the Versailles troops had re-entered the fort, and the federates, when they learnt the fact, quickly retired.[1] The remaining five forts—Issy, Vanves, Montrouge, Bicêtre, and Ivry—were, however, taken possession of by the Comité Central troops without any trouble, and they undoubtedly constituted strongholds of terrible power for the defence of Paris on that side of the Seine.

The loss of Mont Valérien to the federates was but one more evidence that the Comité Central had been utterly unprepared for its easy victory on the 18th, and was without pre-arranged plans for following it up to the best advantage. Thiers was in anxiety lest the federates should suddenly march upon him at

[1] *Le 18 Mars*, pp. 184–187.

Versailles, before he should have been able to form a sufficient reliable force to pit against them. Had the Comité Central anticipated the events of the 18th, and considered that it would become imperative upon it to completely defeat the Government troops ere it could claim to have permanently established a government of its own, it would, in all probability, have blocked the exit of the Government and its force from Paris, and have at once precipitated a struggle in the city, which should have resulted in either one or other of the combatants' absolute overthrow. But March 18th surprised all parties in Paris, and the Comité Central the most. The city was left to the insurgents, who allowed the Government and the regular troops to depart without hindrance, being elated beyond measure at the mere possession of the capital. The forts vacated by the Government were so tardily occupied by the Comité Central that the chief of the six was lost to them.

On both sides there was a remarkable absence of forethought, decision, and practical intelligence, and the final result of the mediocre guidance which hitherto the leaders have displayed no man can foretell. There are two French powers in France, openly antagonistic, yet both averse to engaging in a bloody civil war, though it must come to this if Conciliation and Compromise fail to reconcile their contending claims. Thiers had decided that, if war should ensue, he would act strictly on the defensive until he should have amassed an invincible army—he would run no risk of further defeat by acting hastily. In forming this determination he at last exhibited sound judgment, and his mind, once made up, was not easily turned. In other respects, however, Thiers evinced an indecision which rendered extremely difficult the task of his representatives in Paris. The absence of definite instructions to the mayors considerably complicated their position, and the instructions he sent to Admiral Saisset in the evening of the 19th were equally vague: "Do what you can; I have no orders to give; the mayors have my full powers."[1] Saisset had wished to act at once; but to act 500 men and 50,000 cartridges were required,[2] and these were not instantly forthcoming. Furthermore, word came to him shortly after

[1] *Le 18 Mars*, p. 207.

[2] Delpit, p. 27.

receiving Thiers' message that the Comité Central had undertaken to give up the Hôtel de Ville, and it was needful to wait until the morning to allow time for this important promise to be fulfilled.

March 20th. The morning came, and at ten o'clock the mayor Bonvalet and his adjunct, Murat, went to the Hôtel de Ville to receive at the hands of the Comité Central the possession of that building. But the Comité Central had changed its mind; it now declared that Varlin, Jourde, and Moreau had exceeded their powers, it refused to be bound by their undertaking, and it would not relinquish the coveted treasure which it held. Notwithstanding this breach of faith, the mayors still hoped to accomplish peacefully the task set before them. They specially requested the deputies of the Seine at Versailles to lay before the National Assembly the project of law decided upon the previous evening, and to secure for it urgency. The deputies did this, and urgency was voted.

Possession of the Hôtel de Ville not having been given up, Saisset's way was now made clear for decisive action. He consulted the mayors, and laid down a simple plan for the concentration of his forces, and the gradual encroachment upon and swallowing up of the federates' positions, which the mayors generally approved. Saisset deputed five colonels to bring him 400 men, each man with 160 cartridges and three days' food, and then he proceeded—he also—to consider the terms of a proclamation which he should issue to the Parisians. He doubts under what authority to represent his commission as being held—the Government is discredited, the mayors are feeble politicians: shall he ignore them both and act on his own responsibility? Under which hesitating frame of mind first one and then another proclamation is drawn up, and by-and-by there are various documents published, all purporting to be the veritable and only one. All or none—it matters not; proclamations and platitudes never yet ruled the world and never will. Whilst Saisset deliberates, others are acting.

Tony Moilin, surgeon in the National Guards, had been deputed by the Comité Central to take possession of the mairie of the 6th arrondissement. He took it, but a few hours afterwards the municipal authorities having got the assistance

of some loyal Guards, re-established themselves, and Tony was ousted. The latter then had recourse to Lullier, who sent two battalions to his aid, by means of which he once more installed himself in the mairie. He was, however, a second time expelled by the loyal Guards, who had also become reinforced during the evening. It was thus evident that in some quarters the loyal Guards could hold their own against the federates; they were, however, scattered, and manifested a strong indisposition to leave their own arrondissements. Saisset's desire for concentration was therefore not of easy realization.

Close to the boundary of the 6th arrondissement, and whilst Moilin was being thrust in and out of its mairie, another self-installation took place, of greater note than the army surgeon's. This was Raoul Rigault's assumption of office as Prefect of Police, to which, in accordance with his wishes, experience, and aptitudes, he had been delegated by the Comité Central. Rigault was a journalist and law student, habitué of the police precincts, and had made acquaintance with the inside of a prison on more than one occasion for political offences. After having had some actual experience in the Prefecture during the months of September and October, he now returned to the establishment as its chief, and, being possessed of unlimited self-assurance, though his years were but twenty-five, he made his entry into the place without hesitation. The rooms were crowded with a mixed assemblage of federates and civilians of both sexes, but Rigault marched through them with the decision of a man accustomed to the place and as if he had commanded in it. He straightway went to the great hall, knocked carelessly aside whoever chanced to be in his path, gracefully threw himself into the magistrate's chair at the top, and then, suddenly perceiving a man before him of different bearing to the rough and vulgar crowd, curtly addressed him, "What wish you, citizen?" "Sir," responded the man, "I have been sent for and am here accordingly." "You are——" "The director of the depôt." "Ah yes, Coré, is it not? I know you. Very well, you are dismissed." "Sir, you have not the right to do that. I hold my office from the Government, which alone can remove me from it, and then only after the accomplishment of the necessary formalities." "Of what?" responded Rigault cynically; "I do

not make legality here, I make revolution. You wish not to be dismissed?" "I cannot consent to be so," answered Coré. "Very well," returned Rigault, "wait." The new head of the Police hastily wrote a few words, raised himself, tendered the paper to Coré, and smiling sardonically said, "Your position is now regularised—you are dismissed, and arrested. Guards! take this man to prison, and quickly. March!"[1]

Less masterful than this in form, but equally so in spirit, was the delegation sent by the Comité Central to the Bank of France for the purpose of obtaining money wherewith to pay the federates. The federates must be paid, else they would either refuse to do their service or, being armed, would help themselves where they could. The latter contingency was the most probable, and Jourde, who headed the deputation, referred to it with emphasis as the main reason why the Bank should advance to the Comité Central one million francs; in case of refusal, the Bank would be attacked. The Bank contained within its walls, value in one form or another to the huge total of three milliards of francs[2] (£120,000,000). It also contained a garrison of five hundred employés—all armed, many of them former soldiers—wherewith to defend so vast a treasure. But the garrison, though reliable to the last man, could never hope to hold out against an attack by the federates, who outnumbered it by four hundred to one. The position of M. Rouland, the Governor of the Bank, was one of extreme difficulty, rendered somewhat less so by the knowledge, which the delegation shared as well as the governor, that there was deposited in the Bank, to the credit of the city of Paris, a sum of 8,826,860 francs.[3] Had the right of the Comité Central to represent the town been undisputed, there would have been no difficulty in paying it the town's deposit; but that right was seriously contested, and M. Rouland was averse to parting with a million francs, which, some future day, might be to pay again to the at present dispossessed civic authorities. However, to the argument of force, which Jourde plainly set forth, there was no answer, and the governor wisely consulted the safety of the establishment, rather than the principle of rightful ownership. The million was paid, and the

[1] Forni, pp. 45, 46. [2] Du Camp, t. iii. p. 119.
[3] *Ibid.*, t. iii. p. 131.

Comité Central delegates—eleven in number, including Varlin, Billioray, Arnaud, Assi, and Jourde—departed, well satisfied with the peaceful and successful termination of their mission.

It was natural that, under the new order of things, the six papers suppressed nine days before by Vinoy should reappear, and add their quota in support of the Comité Central, the promised Commune, and the new and glorious era of liberty which was about to commence. The other papers, however, which Vinoy had had no reason to interfere with, were somewhat wedded to old ideas: they, at least, cared not for the new fancies. Thirty-one of the most influential of these organs consulted together, and drew up and signed a document which appeared as an *affiche* on the walls of Paris the next day; in it they declared their opinion that the convocation of electors which the Comité Central had decreed for the 22nd was a usurpation of authority, was null and void, and that no regard should be paid to it.

This was not the only *affiche* of similar import which the Parisians found displayed for their perusal. Another, posted up in the neighbourhood of the Place Vendôme, was signed by a captain of (loyal) National Guards named Bonne, a master tailor, who called upon the people to rally round him so as to form a dike wherewith to stop the progress of the revolution. Still another *affiche*, made by a Captain Nivoley, on Saisset's behalf, implored the people to defend their menaced society. What with these, the mayors, the loyal Guards of Passy and elsewhere, and the respectable and law-abiding tradespeople, there were elements sufficient in Paris to have constituted a formidable resistance to the Comité Central, had not the cowardly flight of the Government bereft them of a common head, and left to individual enterprise what should have been an organized and collective effort. This disintegration was so pronounced that even the 400 men which Saisset had asked for could not be gathered together, so that the action he meditated taking had to be abandoned. A request he made to Thiers for soldiers was refused[1]—Thiers would not reduce on any account the daily increasing army focussed at Versailles.

[1] Du Camp, t. ii. p. 15.

March 21st. The appeal of tailor Bonne met with some response. Crowds of well-affected citizens, unarmed, grouped themselves around his dwelling in the Boulevard des Capucins, from whence they started to patrol the boulevards north and south of the Seine, shouting, "Vive l'Ordre!" "Vive l'Assemblée!" "A bas le Comité!" Being unarmed, they were not interfered with, and at the termination of their peregrinations they decided to meet again the next day in more imposing numbers.

At the instigation of Raoul Rigault, who was not the man to hold any office as a sinecure, the President of the Court of Cassation, M. Bonjean, was arrested and imprisoned, not on any pretence of having committed either crime or fault, but merely for the purpose of holding such an important personage as a hostage, to be used if required as a lever against the Versailles Government. Singularly, there was at this moment a feeling growing up amongst the Central Committee of the twenty arrondissements, that the arrest of General Chanzy had been ill-advised, and was likely to prejudice the popular cause. This Committee met in the evening, and formally appointed a deputation [1] to assure the Comité Central at the Hôtel de Ville of its support and adherence; also, to advocate the release of Chanzy. Chanzy was not released, but he was perhaps fortunate in having the Comité Central to deal with him, and not some of its subordinates. One Ganier d'Abin, a commandant at Montmartre, had during the night shot four men that were brought to him at various intervals, and yet could report to the Comité Central that the night had been "calm and without incidents." [2]

Another application was made to the Comité Central by Clémenceau and Lockroy on behalf of the mayors. This was a request to defer the elections announced for the next day, so that the National Assembly at Versailles might have time to discuss and pass the project of law put before it by the deputies for the Seine, and thus regularise the proceedings. The Comité Central sulked at this demand, and would say neither Yes nor No to it. Clémenceau and Lockroy departed, and rejoined their colleagues, who issued a protest against the elections being held

[1] Including Lefrançais, Theisz, Ch. Beslay, Régère, Ferré, Vaillant, and E. Gérardin.

[2] *La Vérité*, p. 288. Du Camp, t. ii. pp. 8, 9.

the next day, though they still endeavoured to keep on amicable terms with the Comité.[1] The latter, alive to the fact that such protest would go far to stultify any elections held in defiance of it, announced subsequently that they would be deferred until the 23rd. The Comité took this action with an ill grace, believing that the delay meant loss to it, and gain to the mayors.

Hitherto the Comité, since entering upon possession of the Hôtel de Ville, had been wholly engrossed by such affairs as the elections, seizing the public ministries, and placing the municipal administrative machine into working order—the latter a task of much magnitude. Thiers had drawn after him to Versailles most of the public officials and heads of departments, even to the hospital intendance staff, and the labour and thought necessary to provide fresh hands for the hundreds of positions thus suddenly vacated was, taken in conjunction with the still more important military exigencies, sufficient to account, superficially, for a remarkable change which had come over the Comité Central. This change consisted in having practically forgotten the near presence of the German army of occupation. The bellicose attitude which the Comité Central and the federates generally had adopted towards the Prussians during and after the siege, had now been wholly abandoned in face of the more pressing question as to what attitude they could or should adopt towards their own countrymen at Versailles. Notwithstanding the superabundance of new duties, however, the total abeyance into which the Prussian occupation had fallen in the federates' minds cannot but be regarded as a significant indication of the shallowness of their patriotism. A further evidence of the same feeling was shown upon the receipt of a letter which, addressed to the "Actual Commandant of Paris," and signed by the General-in-Chief of the Prussian army, came into the hands of the Comité Central. This letter stated that, pending the termination of the events now proceeding in Paris, so long as those events took not any hostile character to the Prussians, the latter would maintain a pacific and neutral attitude. The friendliness of this unexpected missive delighted the

[1] *Le 18 Mars*, p. 214.

federates, for they had not the slightest thought of making a fresh effort to save the honour of their country by renewing the war against the foreigner; they were only too pleased to find that he did not meditate attacking them. Paschal Grousset's department of Foreign Affairs was at once brought into prominent requisition, in order that a suitable diplomatic reply should be sent to so important a communication.

The evening of that day the federates flattered themselves that they were formally recognised to be an independent power by the German authorities, and the many difficulties which surrounded them appeared of diminished extent. Absurd rumours even took shape of an alliance betwixt them and the foreigner, though the latter was too astute to commit himself to any party whose mettle was not yet proved. The next day—the 22nd—was that appointed for the further demonstration of the Friends of Order, as the followers of tailor Bonne designated themselves—and events connected therewith served to bring home to the federates the fact that the position of affairs, which had been mainly constituted by themselves, could have developments of a serious character.

March 22nd. Around the Grand Hôtel and upon the large Place de l'Opéra there assembled by mid-day some thousands of people, intending demonstrators and simple sight-seers being mingled together; the former distinguished, however, by wearing blue ribbons in their buttonholes. Admiral Saisset, whose headquarters were at this particular place, was there, but to his mind a manifestation by so large a concourse of citizens, unarmed though they were, was inopportune and dangerous. He endeavoured to dissuade those at the head of it from persisting therewith, but his efforts were unsuccessful. After one o'clock the crowd began slowly to proceed down the Rue de la Paix, leading to the Place Vendôme, at which spot were the headquarters of the federated Guards, the commander there being Bergeret, whose chief officer was Count du Bisson. The object of the manifestants in proceeding thus into the hornets' nest—to endeavour to make converts by peaceable means—was doubtless laudable from their point of view, but the execution of it exhibited great lack of discernment and of discretion. Arrived at the entrance to the Place Vendôme, their further progress was

barred by a cordon of National Guards with bayonets fixed. General Bergeret summoned the "rioters" to retire; they did not do so, but engaged in discussion with the Guards that faced them. Drums behind were now beat to signal the federates to be ready. Suddenly a shot was fired, from whence has never been determined;[1] then came the order from Bergeret's lieutenant, Du Bisson, to fire,[2] instantly acted upon—a volley poured into the crowd wrought death and injury in its midst. The manifestants rushed wildly away, and the firing continued till not a soul was to be seen in the street, whilst shops were quickly closed, and doors and windows that had been filled with sight-seers were shut and barred. Of the manifestants, thirteen were killed[3] and a similar number injured; of the federates, two were killed and eight injured,[4] among the latter being a member of the Comité Central. The fact that the federates suffered to this extent goes far to support their contention that many of the manifestants were really armed; on the other hand it is stated that the federates, firing, as they did, with a vindictive eagerness, themselves caused the wounds of their comrades. The responsibility of the affair rests with both parties, for in the excited state of public feeling then existent, to create a manifestation at such a point was a most rash undertaking, whilst it was repulsed with the thoughtless impetuosity of men who had not yet realized the deadly power of the weapons they handled.

The Comité Central, though free from the reproach of having ordered or even suggested this slaughter, defended and upheld its officers. It was beginning to take a sterner view of its position; the negotiations with the mayors were distasteful to it; the latter, for the most part, acted in support of the Government at Versailles, and the arrest of these municipals was openly advocated by some members of the Comité. This severe measure was not decided upon, though an attempt had been made to seize M. Héligon, an adjunct, which failed owing to the bold resistance made by him.[5]

The mairies, however, of certain mayors who had been considered friendly to the Comité, and which had hitherto escaped

[1] De la Brugère, p. 34.
[2] Du Camp, t. iv. p. 93.
[3] *Rapport d'ensemble*, p. 38.
[4] Lefrançais, p. 164. *La Vérité*, p. 296.
[5] Delpit, pp. 53, 54.

being forcibly taken possession of, were now seized, one of the displaced officials being Clémenceau. Tony Moilin, whose double expulsion from the mairie of the 6th arrondissement has been recorded, was at last firmly reinstalled there. The only mairies remaining unconquered were those of the 1st and 2nd arrondissements, the latter being the meeting-place of the mayors, and well defended by loyal Guards under Saisset's direction. There was no doubt that the Comité Central could have taken these two also, had it been so disposed.

The federate predominance in Paris was indisputable; both leaders and followers were conscious of the fact, and became braggart and overbearing in consequence. That morning a member of the Comité Central declared to the mayors that the comedy of negotiation had endured long enough;[1] in the evening, Saisset, even in his own stronghold, was called a traitor by the man who had arrested Chanzy—Léo Meillet. The Bank of France, notwithstanding its loyal garrison, recognised its real impotence, and again made large advances to Varlin for the purpose of paying the federates.

Shortness of funds was a pressing difficulty to the Comité Central, despite the Bank's advances and the various receipts from *octroi* duties and other sources of income which the Comité now began to receive. At Varlin's suggestion, it was permitted for chiefs of posts to obtain what they needed by means of "requisition orders"[2]—a paper currency which should be redeemed when the finances of the new power were satisfactorily arranged. The rank and file of the federates felt the monetary trouble as much as their superiors, and were not over-scrupulous in respecting other people's property. Besides these, there were plenty of needy adventurers and scoundrels in Paris, so that, the police services being wholly disorganized, and also diverted from ordinary to special uses, it became necessary for the Comité Central to post up at the Hôtel de Ville the announcement: "Thieves caught in the act will be immediately shot."

Along with that announcement there appeared another relative to the negotiations going on with the mayors. In it the Comité Central stated that the mayors and deputies were

[1] Delpit, p. 55.

[2] Du Camp, t. iv. p. 10.

doing all they could to impede the elections, and had declared civil war against the federates, but that the Comité Central would accept the struggle and crush the resistance. In consequence, the elections would be finally deferred until Sunday, the 26th.

The mayors and deputies certainly desired to delay the elections, but only until such time as they could be held regularly and by authority of the National Assembly, which could not be before April 3rd. Some of them went to Versailles on March 23rd, and, clothed in their municipal insignias, made a theatrical appearance before the Assembly, with the object of furthering their demands. Their application, however, was completely barren of results, for no concession beyond those previously granted would be given either by the Assembly or the Government.

In this sitting of the National Assembly, a declaration made by M. Jules Favre deserves notice. Solemnly he demanded pardon from God and from men for the error which he had committed and the excess of confidence he had shown in permitting the National Guards of Paris to retain their arms after the capitulation. Let Favre's humiliation and eye-opening serve as a warning to all procrastinators and shirkers of unpleasant duties! It is wiser, nobler, grander, not to defer evil days that must sooner or later come, but to advance and quicken them, get them over and out of sight. The sunshine which follows the storm is more beneficent and glorious than that which precedes it.

The day following—March 24th—there appeared upon the walls of Paris various proclamations, emanating from Admiral Saisset. Their contradictions and sentimental flourishes are valueless, but enclosed within them was the limit to which the Government was prepared to go to put an end to the present strained situation. The Government proposals were: The recognition of the right of Paris to elect a municipal council; National Guards to elect their own officers, from the general-in-chief downwards; modifications in regard to the maturity of bills and a law to ease the position of small rent-payers.[1]

[1] *Le 18 Mars*, p. 227. Lefrançais, p. 167.

These proposals were accepted by the Comité Central, but it would not consent to wait until April 3rd for the municipal elections. It sent Brunel, one of its members, and Protot, to Admiral Saisset and the mayors to inform them of this; but the latter, on their part, would not agree to the date of March 26th: the time was too short, they said, to arrange for holding elections, if they were to be of any value. Brunel and Protot acquainted their colleagues at the Hôtel de Ville with this, whereupon Bergeret and Assi energetically demanded the rupture of the negotiations, which seemed ever to be abortive and of indefinite termination.[1]

At the same meeting of the Comité Central, the chief military power, which had erewhile been vested in Charles Lullier, whose restless and ambitious spirit had done much for the organization and successful employment of the National Guards since the 18th inst., was placed in abeyance, pending the acceptance of the position by Garibaldi, to whom it had been offered. It was, however, never accepted by him. Meanwhile, three generals of division were appointed, viz., Brunel, Eudes, and Duval. These immediately issued a proclamation which indicated a more determined and precise attitude on the part of the Comité Central: "All who are not with us are against us."[2] The time for halting or temporizing is going—if not already gone.

As for Lullier, he had been arrested and imprisoned earlier in the day. He had engaged in secret transactions with persons who had the ear of the Government at Versailles; he had plotted to arrest the Comité Central, to deliver Paris to the Versaillais, to fill his own pockets, and to satisfy his inordinate ambition by the prospect of a still higher and less hazardous position than that he held. His capacities for such a delicate and important business were inadequate; the secret leaked out, and his instant fall was the result, together with that of two of his accomplices.

Though many members of the Comité Central were angry at the mayors' refusal to fall in with their wishes as to the elections being held on the 26th, an open rupture was still avoided

[1] Du Camp, t. iv. p. 12.

[2] *Le* 18 *Mars*, p. 228.

and endeavours made to secure their assent to that date. The Comité felt that the authority of the mayors was more legitimate than its own. Could it but induce them to accept the date of the 26th, it would throw over the elections a mantle of legality which would otherwise be wanting, and at the same time it would show to the Parisians, who fully understood the question at issue, that the mayors had yielded whilst the Comité had gained their point. Precisely the reverse conclusion would be drawn if the Comité agreed to defer the elections until April 3rd, and such an inference might be fatal to its own success at the polls; for, notwithstanding the assumed modesty which prompted the declaration that its task was accomplished and it was about to retire into the ranks, the Comité Central inwardly hoped and expected to be elected *en bloc* to form the projected municipality or Commune of Paris. Time was, however, getting very short for the production of any concerted action, and therefore the Comité Central determined to expedite by force the negotiations which had dragged slowly along the path of argument. It commissioned Brunel, one of the newly appointed military chiefs, to carry out its wishes.

Brunel, at the head of four battalions of Guards, and with four pieces of artillery, proceeded to the mairie of the 1st arrondissement, and demanded that it should be delivered up to him, or, that the mayors should agree to the date of the 26th for the elections. Both alternatives were at first refused by M. Méline, the acting adjunct, and reinforcements were on the way to him from the mairie of the 2nd arrondissement, when he decided to parley with Brunel, as a result of which they finally agreed to compromise the question at issue and fix the elections for the 30th March. A document to this effect was signed by Brunel, and, in further token of the agreement, the whole of the municipal authorities at this mairie, wearing their insignias of office, accompanied Brunel, Protot, and the federated battalions to the mairie of the 2nd arrondissement. The peaceable and conjoint procession thereto was hailed with joy by the citizens along the route, who thought that now at last all conflict between the mayors and the Comité Central was at an end. Arrived at their destination, Brunel and his battalions entered the large hall of the mairie, wherein were most of the mayors,

their adjuncts, and the aide-de-camp of Admiral Saisset. After discussion, the arrangement come to by Méline and Brunel was finally approved by all the authorities present, and the assembly adjourned until the evening.[1]

But the Comité Central refused to ratify the arrangement; it sent Ranvier and Arnold to the evening meeting of the mayors to inform them that Brunel and Protot had no authority to alter the date from the 26th to the 30th, and that the 26th must remain in force. This declaration stimulated controversy amongst the mayors; there were those who wished to accept it, others who would not. After six hours' abortive discussion the meeting broke up, the prevailing impression being that an open struggle had become inevitable. Those of the mayors who had consistently opposed the Comité Central instructed one of their number, M. Dubail, to inform the citizens of Paris of the want of faith of the Comité, and of the insincerity and irregularity which would be sure to characterize the proposed elections.[2] This was in the early hours of the 25th.

At eleven o'clock the same morning, at the 2nd arrondissement mairie, surrounded by many of his colleagues, Dubail was busy correcting the printer's proof of his address to the citizens, when several deputies, including Clémenceau, Lockroy, and Floquet, arrived from Versailles, and Ranvier and Arnold from the Comité Central. The subject of the previous night's discussion was re-opened. Ranvier and Arnold once again said: "Will you convoke the elections for the 26th? If so, we will render to you your mairies, and the elections will be conducted by you." It is the last offer: the decision, whichever way it be, will be momentous. Nevertheless, the mayors for whom Dubail act hesitate not an instant to re-affirm their refusal to yield to the Comité Central on this point. Then Clémenceau and Floquet speak up: "It is current talk in the lobbies of the National Assembly that the Duc d'Aumale is about to be proclaimed Lieutenant-General of France." The ancient Orléanist proclivities of Thiers and the known Orléanist majority in the Assembly rush to every one's thoughts; the statement is credible—has not some such thing been rumoured

[1] *Le* 18 *Mars*, pp. 229–232.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 235, 236.

ever since February 8th? The Republic is in danger; better the Commune than a restoration of Monarchical despotism. The mayors, with the exception of two,[1] hesitate no longer; they seize their pens and impulsively sign the treaty of agreement with the Comité Central; it is signed also by the deputies present, and by Ranvier and Arnold.[2] The negotiations have at last terminated, and the Comité Central has won the day.

The Orléanist rumour which played so great a part in this transaction had never any solid foundation for its existence, though, as a rumour, it undoubtedly prevailed. It originated from the irritation of some Orléanist deputies at the proclamation issued by Admiral Saisset, in which they thought they discerned a veiled attempt at dictatorship by that officer;[3] they had, however, no intention of putting such irritation or the Orléanist desires which sprung from it into Parliamentary form, and certainly had no power to give either feeling any practical effect. It soon became evident to them and to all the world that any thoughts of a Saisset dictatorship were utterly groundless. Saisset's vocation was, in fact, gone: the mayors no longer resisting, but according with the Comité Central; Thiers, fussy, irritable, unmilitary, most indefinite in instructions, and refusing the least reinforcement; the loyal forces in Paris scattered and without outward mark by which to distinguish them from the insurgent—under such conditions it was idle to attempt a struggle which would have meant a certain defeat, or to keep up an appearance of resistance which could be nothing now but a hollow pretence. Saisset, that Saturday afternoon, lifted himself out of such an equivocal and untenable position by relinquishing the few buildings which he held, disbanding his troops and departing himself for Versailles, where he received nothing but reproaches for abandoning his task so swiftly.

A further result of the agreement between the mayors and the Comité Central was the release of Generals Chanzy and Langourian, as also the liberation of the member of the Comité Central who had been arrested by loyal Guards at Passy the same day as the generals. Chanzy was set free against the wish of the federate chiefs of the arrondissements in which he

[1] Dubail and Héligon. [2] *Le 18 Mars*, pp. 237–239.
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 237–239.

had been imprisoned, and they sought to re-arrest him. He, however, was apprised of the fact by Babick,[1] a member of the Comité, and quitted Paris during the night with the utmost secrecy. He arrived the next day at Versailles.

Consternation reigned at Versailles when the news of the Paris accord reached there. The mayors and deputies who had signed the agreement were strongly reproved by the ministers and the majority of the deputies of the National Assembly, but the extreme Republican section supported them, and M. Louis Blanc, appertaining thereto, brought forward a motion in the Assembly declaring that the mayors had acted as good citizens. This proposition, however, met with no encouragement; a formal decision upon it was deferred until the following Monday.

Sunday, the 26th, in due course arrived, and turned out to be a day of brilliant sunshine, like the preceding Sunday. Paris once again was *en fête.* Its inhabitants left their houses early in the day to drink in the warm sun rays, which were ever blissful and genial after the severities and hardships of the winter. Moreover, the elections were to be held; everybody knew, and everybody was concerned in the fact. The election of a municipal council had been constantly demanded since the fall of the Empire—it had at last arrived under circumstances questionable, but sufficiently legal in the minds of the citizens generally, after the agreement of the mayors with the Comité Central. Had not Thiers given the mayors full powers? If those powers were ill-defined, and if the mayors had done what he disapproved—that was his fault, not theirs. Thus did the average Parisian voter look upon the matter; there was no doubt that an agreement between legitimacy and illegitimacy had been arrived at, and that was the main fact for him.

In regard to the text of that agreement, however, there were two versions placarded on the walls and hoardings for the Parisians to read. Both versions purported to be an exact reproduction of the agreement which had been signed the previous day, but one was evidently inaccurate. The Comité Central version appeared first; at the bottom of it were the names of thirty-two of its members as signatories: manifestly a super-

[1] Dalsème, p. 5.

addition to the text, which was signed on its behalf only by Ranvier and Arnold. The object in thus placing on the agreement a full list of the active members of the Comité was that, on such a day, the names of these generally obscure men might be brought before the electors and voted for. This amplification alone, however, would not have perchance brought about the speedy correction which followed the publication of that account by the issue of a second version emanating from the mayors. The sting of the Hôtel de Ville version consisted in placing the Comité Central first, and the mayors and deputies after it, thus: "The Comité Central of the National Guard, to which are rallied the deputies of Paris, the mayors and adjuncts," etc. The authentic version of the agreement, according to the mayors, commenced as follows: "The Deputies of Paris, the mayors and adjuncts, reinstalled in the mairies of their arrondissements, and the members of the Comité Central of the National Guard," etc. It was for the Parisians to judge between the two; each version called to the elections that day as the only means of avoiding civil war and of maintaining the Republic. The mairies, however, were not restored to the mayors; only in a few instances did these municipal officers preside at the election bureaus; at the other places federate officers took charge.

There appeared on the walls several other placards, one of which was also from the Comité Central. In it that body modestly reaffirmed that its mission was terminated, and it gave some exceedingly wise advice to the electors—that they should choose as their representatives only men who were modest, disinterested, actors—in contradistinction to mere word-spinners—sincere, honest, and of kindred sympathies and positions to themselves. "Surely," the Comité must have thought, "we who can give such magnanimous and sound counsel are the fittest persons to be elected!"

A fourth address to the citizens was from the six deputies who had signed the agreement, justifying their action and asking the electors to terminate the conflict by their votes in such a manner that a recourse to arms might not be required.

A fifth and very lengthy manifesto was issued by the Committee of the twenty arrondissements, signed by Lefrançais, Jules

Vallès, and others, entering into a disquisition upon political and social matters, to induce the electors to vote for socialistic candidates.

Further instructions and suggestions to the electors were afforded in the newspapers or journals. Those appertaining to the revolutionary party were couched generally in very vulgar language, which would not give ordinary people any pleasure to read. The people of Paris were, however, at this juncture not ordinary, but filled with the sophistries and prophetic powers which the Jacobinical writers used and extolled so freely. They were pleased to be flattered and spoken to in terms of approbation and encouragement; like many simple persons they believed all that was printed was truth, and the lying and unprincipled adulations of men like Pyat, Vallès, and Vermesch sunk into the minds of the federates, and produced in them an exaltation of hope, which a small amount of reflection would have shown to be ridiculously beyond the limits of permanent realization.

The elections took place without any disturbing incident. Each arrondissement was to elect one representative for every 20,000 of population or fraction thereof over 10,000, and not less than one-eighth of the total number of voters was required to constitute an election valid. The voting went on from eight in the morning until midnight. The results became known the next day, and were awaited at Versailles with as great anxiety as at Paris with eagerness. The broad result of the elections from the Versailles point of view was that Paris had called to its Common Council or Commune the rankest agitators, revolutionists, and Comité Centralists that it possessed, whilst men of moderate opinions, who were in friendly relations with the Versaillais, were represented by a comparatively small number—21 out of 86. Had the elections turned out differently, with the moderate and respectable element in a decided majority, the National Assembly might have overlooked the hated agreement and absolved the mayors from its displeasure; but, the outcome of the compromise being the birth of a body of whose intense hostility there could be no doubt, the mayors and their unfortunate actions were visited with a prompt and formal condemnation. M. Blanc's motion, declaring that the mayors had acted

as good citizens, was almost unanimously rejected, and by this decision the elections at Paris were refused acknowledgment by the representatives of France, and consequently became illegal. M. Thiers immediately despatched messages throughout the country, stating that the Government was entirely a stranger to the agreement made between the mayors and the Comité Central, that the elections were without moral authority, and the country need not preoccupy itself with them, but need only have confidence. Order would be restored at Paris as elsewhere.[1] The full powers with which Thiers had invested the mayors not nine days before were thus flatly disavowed, and the same repudiation of delegated authority came from the Chief of the Executive Power of France as had come from the obscure Comité Central.

[1] *Le 18 Mars*, p. 253.

CHAPTER X

THE COMMUNAL ELECTIONS

RESULTS AND ANALYSES

THE following is a list of the persons elected to the Commune, March 26th, 1871 :—

1st Arrondissement. (Louvre.)	Adam, Méline, Rochard, Baré.
2nd Arrondissement. (Bourse.)	Brelay, Loiseau-Pinson, Tirard, Chéron.
3rd Arrondissement. (Temple.)	Demay, A. Arnaud, Pindy, Murat, Clovis Dupont.
4th Arrondissement. (Hôtel de Ville.)	A. Arnould, Lefrançais, Clémence, E. Gérardin, Amouroux.
5th Arrondissement. (Panthéon.)	Régère, Jourde, Tridon, Blanchet, Ledroyt.
6th Arrondissement. (Luxembourg.)	Albert Leroy, Goupil, Robinet, Beslay, Varlin.
7th Arrondissement. (Palais Bourbon.)	Parisel, E. Lefèvre, Urbain, Brunel.
8th Arrondissement. (Champs Elysées.)	Raoul Rigault, Vaillant, A. Arnould (duplicate election), Jules Allix.
9th Arrondissement. (Opéra.)	Ranc, Parent, Desmarest, E. Ferry, Nast.
10th Arrondissement. (Enclos St. Laurent.)	Gambon, Félix Pyat, Henri Fortuné, Champy, Babick, Rastoul.
11th Arrondissement. (Popincourt.)	Mortier, Delescluze, Protot, Assi, Eudes, Avrial, Verdure.
12th Arrondissement. (Reuilly.)	Varlin (duplicate election), Géresme, Theisz, Fruneau.
13th Arrondissement. (Gobelins.)	Léo Meillet, E. Duval, Chardon, Frankel.
14th Arrondissement. (Observatoire.)	Billioray, Martelet, Descamps.

15th Arrondissement. (Vaugirard.)	V. Clément, Jules Vallès, Langevin.
16th Arrondissement. (Passy.)	Marmottan, De Bouteiller.
17th Arrondissement. (Batignolles-Monceaux.)	Varlin (triplicate election), E. Clément, Ch. Gérardin, Chalain, Malon.
18th Arrondissement. (Buttes Montmartre.)	Blanqui, Theisz (duplicate election), Dereure, J. B. Clément, Th. Ferré, Vermorel, Paschal Grousset.
19th Arrondissement. (Buttes Chaumont.)	Oudet, Puget, Cournet,[1] Delescluze (duplicate election), Miot, Ostyn, Gustave Flourens.
20th Arrondissement. (Ménilmontant.)	Bergeret, Ranvier, Gustave Flourens (duplicate election), Blanqui (duplicate election).

Total elections, 93; duplicates and triplicates, 7; leaving 86 as the number of persons elected. The total number of electors inscribed on the lists was 481,970;[2] the total number actually voting was 224,197—less than half: a fact which was made much of by the Government and its adherents at Versailles, as showing that the Commune did not represent even the half of Paris. The same argument was employed in regard to the agreement made between the mayors and the Comité Central, seven mayors only having signed it out of a total of 20, and thirty-two adjuncts out of 60. The argument was, however, shallow in both cases. Those who, from whatever cause, neglect or fail to attend to their legal duties have no ground of complaint if action is taken in their absence which they disapprove of. In no country

[1] In only one of the many lists I have of the results of the elections does the name of Cournet appear. That is in De la Brugère's account, p. 42. Even in the official *Le 18 Mars* and *Rapport d'ensemble* it is absent. Whether Cournet was really elected along with the other persons in the 19th arrondissement or not, it is an undoubted fact that he formed part of the Communal body from the outset of its career, and the probabilities are therefore greatly in favour of his election. This instance is only one out of very many I have met with in the course of this work, where even a simple question of fact appears to be beyond the range of absolute denial or affirmation. I have not troubled the reader with details of these doubtful statements except in a few cases, trusting rather to use my own judgment, and to insert that which, after considering all the circumstances known to me, appeared most likely to be true.

[2] *Rapport d'ensemble*, p. 41.

governed upon the principle of electoral representation are the absentees taken into account—they are rightly judged to be amenable to the consequences of not voting and must suffer the dominion of those who voted. It is incontestable that numbers of citizens in Paris did not vote, and also that the city had undergone a considerable denudation of its better-class population during the last nine months, first before the siege, then, and very notably, after the capitulation, and lastly as a consequence of the flight of the Government to Versailles. The last-named was the least important in the exodus. In regard to the first two occasions there had been ample time for the return of the absentees, who, however, had voluntarily remained away.

In all the arrondissements except two, the prescribed eighth of the electors necessary to validate the elections was far exceeded; the exceptions were in the 8th arrondissement, where Rigault, Vaillant, and Allix came under the eighth, and in the 15th arrondissement, where Langevin did. In none of these cases, however, was the deficiency great.

The 86 elected persons may be conveniently classified under five divisions, but with the first division it may at once be stated that this history has very little to do, for most of the members comprised within it never sat in or formed any real part of the Commune, whilst those who, at the beginning, did form part of it, retired at a very early date, as will be notified in due course.

Démissionnaire Class.— Adam, Méline, Rochard, Baré, Brelay, Loiseau-Pinson, Tirard, Chéron, Albert Leroy, Goupil, Robinet, Ranc, Parent, Desmarest, E. Ferry, Nast, Fruneau, Marmottan, De Bouteiller, Murat, Lefèvre . . . . . =21

Twelve of these persons had been either mayors or adjuncts elected in November, 1870; they were Adam, Méline, Brelay, Loiseau-Pinson, Murat, Albert Leroy, Desmarest, Ferry, Nast; Tirard, Marmottan, Chéron. The first nine of these had signed the agreement made with the Comité Central, and Tirard had given in his adhesion to it.[1]

Deducting the twenty-one members above-named, and also

[1] *Le* 18 *Mars*, p. 246.

Blanqui, who was held in prison by Thiers, there remains a total of sixty-four persons, whose respective claims to popular favour may be roughly gauged by the division under which they fall.

Members of the Comité Central.—Arthur Arnould, Antoine Arnaud, Assi, Blanchet, Brunel, Babick, Billioray, Bergeret, Clovis Dupont, Eudes, Fortuné, Géresme, Jourde, Mortier, Ostyn, Pindy, Ranvier, Varlin, Vaillant . .	= 19	
Members of the International Association.—Amouroux, Assi, Avrial, Beslay, Babick, Clémence, V. Clément, Chalain, Demay, Duval, Dereure, Frankel, Emile Gérardin, Jourde, Lefrançais, Langevin, Malon, Ostyn, Oudet, Pindy, Theisz, Varlin, Vaillant, Verdure	= 24	
	43	
Deduct Assi, Babick, Jourde, Ostyn, Pindy, Varlin, and Vaillant, found in both the above lists	= 7	= 36
Journalists.—Arthur Arnould, Chardon, J. B. Clément, Cournet, Delescluze, Ferré, Flourens, Gambon, Paschal Grousset, Miot, Félix Pyat, Protot, Rigault, Tridon, Verdure, Jules Vallès, Vermorel	= 17	
Deduct Verdure and Arnould, found in preceding lists	2	= 15
Speakers at Club and Public Meetings.—Amouroux, Jules Allix, Champy, E. Clément, Demay, Descamps, Charles Gérardin, Ledroyt, Léo Meillet, Martelet, Ostyn, Oudet, Parisel, Puget, Régère, Rastoul, Urbain . . .	= 17	
Deduct Amouroux, Demay, Ostyn, Oudet, found in preceding lists	4	= 13
Total . . .		64

The last division includes only those who do not fall under

any of the others; it is by no means exhaustive of all the elected persons who were speakers at club and public meetings, for nearly the whole 64 members would come under this category.

Twenty-eight persons out of the 64 formed part also of the Central Committee of the twenty arrondissements. Their names were Ant. Arnaud, Babick, Beslay, Champy, Clémence, Chardon, Demay, Duval, Ch. Gérardin, E. Gérardin, Ferré, Fortuné, Lefrançais, Malon, Martelet, Léo Meillet, Oudet, Parisel, Pindy, Puget, Régère, Ranvier, Theisz, Tridon, Urbain, Varlin, Vaillant, and Vallès. Thus it will be seen that the ramifications and connections between the various members were very extensive. These sixty-four elected might be said to form one huge family of different but real relationships.

The political views of the sixty-four persons will be partly understood by what has preceded. The most moderate amongst them were advanced Republicans, following from which there came representatives of every shade of democratic, socialistic, and revolutionary opinion. The most revolutionary of the four divisions above given was that of the journalists or Jacobins, who followed, for the most part, the lead which Blanqui gave, and who took for their ideal the Commune and Committee of Public Safety of 1792. The most conservative—though this term is completely misapplied to it—division was that of the Internationalists, who looked forward to the Commune as a means of raising and benefiting the oppressed and underpaid workman. They desired, nevertheless, to do this in as legitimate a manner as possible.

Numbers out of each of the four divisions had suffered imprisonment or exile for political offences under the Empire, and at the hands of the quasi-Republican Government of the National Defence. Imprisonment for such offences more often defeats its object than attains it, and those members who had thus suffered were not held lowest in the admiration of the Parisian population. The most notable of these sometime prisoners were Varlin, Flourens, Assi, Delescluze, Malon, Lefrançais, Gambon, Miot, Pindy, Cournet, Vermorel, Tridon, and Eudes.

Two features which markedly distinguish these sixty-four

members of the Commune from all other representative bodies of like account are their ages and their occupations. The bulk of them were young, and many belonged originally to the working classes. Twenty individuals were aged between 25 and 30; fifteen between 30 and 35. Not less than twenty-six were, properly speaking, workmen, whom the possession of abilities above the average of their class had brought into prominence and influence amongst their fellows. The attainment of this result had been largely assisted by the oppressive prosecutions of the Empire, and the more recent war and siege, all which gave the men the opportunities of criticising and condemning the authorities, and placing in relief the injustices and incapacities under which they suffered. Work of a different calibre now lies before them, and before the professional politicians, barristers, painters, doctors, and journalists, who, with the workmen, make up the entire Commune—work that is not destructive only—that is comparatively easy of accomplishment—but constructive, which is difficult.

PARIS UNDER THE COMMUNE

March 28th. PARIS against France; France against Paris: that was the situation. Paris, whose noisier elements had for so long time clamoured for a Commune—whose vital frame had been racked by the four months' siege, and its heart rent by the grievous capitulation and terms of peace; which, by an amazing succession of supine acts on the part of its and the country's Government, had got rid, as if by magic, of the army that was directed to subdue it, and of the Rulers who had so little known how to rule; which had accepted, during a week, open government by men of no standing and of unknown capacities, who, by a mixture of force and falseness, aided by fortuitous circumstances, had obtained, as they thought, the consent of that Versailles Authority, which was still acknowledged to be head in the land, to the election of a Commune; which, finally, had elected its Commune by such significant and imposing numbers that there could be no doubt that the elected were really and fully representative of its wishes at that moment. This culmination of its hopes has, unhappily, ill-suited the nation's deputies at Versailles, whose fiat of Illegality has gone forth and has transformed a covert and reconcilable hostility into an avowed and irreconcilable breach. "Order will be restored at Paris, as elsewhere." Is it to be civil war supervening upon the horrors and vicissitudes of a national conflict? Paris is not ill-fitted for holding its own; it has abundant stores of ammunition, a thousand pieces of artillery,[1] over two hundred thousand federates,[2] the fortifica-

[1] *Rapport d'ensemble*, pp. 120–136. Exact number, 1,045 pieces. The great difference between this total and that given on p. 99 is accounted for by the artillery in the various forts and positions exterior to the fortifications, which of course were not referred to in the former instance.

[2] *Rapport d'ensemble*, p. 117.

tions—which even the Germans failed to surmount—and six forts, not perfect after their recent bombardment, but nevertheless towers of strength. Its administration and public services are still greatly disorganized, but in this respect it is no worse off than its adversaries, who, suddenly flown to Versailles, where are neither the usual offices nor any records, and with an incomplete staff, are in a state of clerical dislocation and jumble which only the word chaotic can adequately describe. At Versailles, however, the work of reconstruction falls to practised hands, and there, rather than at Paris, is the re-establishment of administrative order to be first expected.

Only in this disordered officialdom is the balance of power betwixt Paris and Versailles equal. At Versailles there are concentrated the will and the political intellect of France. Some few large industrial provincial towns and their republican representatives favour the course which Paris is adopting, and similar communal movements are even in progress at Marseilles and elsewhere; but, compared with the rest of France, these expressions of support and sympathy for the capital are insignificant—the nation, as a whole, is overwhelmingly antagonistic to revolutionary Communes. This Commune of Paris must be put down, think the assembled deputies at Versailles, and the little man, Thiers, is eager to execute their wishes. How to do it is the only question. At Versailles there are the discredited troops withdrawn from Paris on the 18th inst.—demoralised, disorganized, distrusted: a nucleus less reliable than would have been a similar number of National Guards. To these have been, and daily will be added, prisoner troops returned by the German conqueror, and others gathered from the provinces; but their spirits are flagged, and their enthusiasm for fighting their own countrymen is extremely doubtful. The French soldier is also politician, and in the present disturbed condition of political affairs it is impossible to say what opinions he may have formed, and what action he may take. There are other facts to be remembered: that advanced Republicanism, which approves Paris, suspects the sincerity of Thiers; that there are Orléanist intrigues and Imperialist hatreds directed against the existing regime, which latter is the forerunner of one knows not what; that the stigma of the humiliating surrender to the

Prussians attaches to the Government, whilst its manifest inability hitherto to make itself respected in the capital lays bare the inference that it is not worth respecting—are these things not enough to cause any but the most clear-sighted or the most disciplined soldier to doubt whether, after all, Paris were not in the right and Versailles wrong? Thiers feels this with the keenest anxiety; none better than himself realizes how weak his position is. He is so conscious of it that he almost trembles lest the federates should march upon Versailles before his forces are sufficiently strong to present a bold front to them. Such a battle a few days ago could hardly have ended other than in a complete victory for the Parisians, but they were slow to comprehend the necessities of their unexpected success on the 18th; now every day—yea, every hour—is of immense advantage to Versailles, and sees the work of consolidation, training, disciplining, further advanced, and the mobile, uncertain atoms of humanity rendered more compact and reliable. Such military operations are, at Versailles, in progress unceasingly, and are characterized by the utmost energy; on the other hand, at Paris, the federates take unkindly to discipline and training, and their officers neither see the necessity for, nor possess the power to enforce army evolutions in any rigorous degree. This 28th of March, Tuesday, is set apart as a holiday; the formal inauguration of the Commune is to be celebrated, and for such great event Paris must deliver itself up to gaiety and jubilance.

Cannons sounding forth from the heights of Montmartre and Chaumont, and from the forts south of the river, had heralded in the day. The *Journal Officiel* published a list of the persons elected, and, in the same number, an article by one of them, Edouard Vaillant, which by its sinister import attracted universal attention. This article advocated the assassination of the members of the former reigning French families. "Society has only one duty towards princes—death." Visions of the National Convention and the Committee of Public Safety rose in men's minds; but, as dreams, they passed away and were forgotten.

Preparations for the event of the day, which was fixed to take place at four in the afternoon, went on apace. The Hôtel de Ville was beautified—or disfigured—with red drapery, which, by intention, concealed the statue of Henri Quatre, and threw

into relief a new bust of Liberty procured for the occasion, evidencing that the new regime was, even as others, symbolical and ostentatious. A platform was erected in front of the Palace, a table placed thereon, and an elevated seat supplied for the President. As the appointed hour approached, throngs of citizens and numerous battalions of National Guards arrived, and the bands of the latter beguiled away the time; privileged citizens[1]—in a theoretical Commune there are none such—took their places behind the table, and flag-holders ranged themselves at each side of it; cannons from the neighbouring quays belched forth their thunders, and the people, full of enthusiasm, lifted up their voices with cries of "*Vive la Commune!*" and "*Vive la République!*" At a given moment, the thousands of National Guards that were marshalled before the Hôtel de Ville, placed their caps on the points of their bayonets and raised their guns in the air; the elected members of the Commune made their way on to the platform, the non-elected of the Comité Central also were there, and finally, Ranvier, the president for the time being, occupied the chair reserved for him. Then, amidst renewed cheering, salvoes of artillery, bugle calls, and beatings of drums, the inaugural proceedings began.

A list of the persons elected having been read out, Assi, amidst vehement plaudits, proclaimed the Commune and made a speech; Ranvier and others also spoke, bursts of cheering interrupting, and all the resources of militant display assisting. After this came the defiling before the platforms of the various federated battalions, all to the cry of "*Vive la Commune!*" but the throng of people was so dense that it soon became necessary to temporarily stop further influx. The parade, however, went on until seven o'clock, and not less than 100,000 Guards took part in it. Thus, amidst commotion, noise, and excitement enough to stir any heart that was not framed in adamant, was the ornamental heading to the Commune writ within the minds of the enthusiastic populace, all forgetful for the moment of some other 100,000 soldiers gathered at Versailles, whose specific mission was to neutralize and annul that day's proceedings.

[1] *Le Comité Central*, etc., par Auguste Hardy, p. 4.

After the inauguration ceremony, a meeting of the newly born Commune was held in the large municipal chamber of the Hôtel de Ville, but the whole of the elected persons were not present, no intimation having been sent them that a meeting was to be held.[1] Such an intimation could only have proceeded from the Comité Central, but this body, chagrined at the extensive effacement it had experienced in the elections, abstained from affording any assistance to the new-comers. Despite its magnanimous protestations a few days before of having fulfilled its task, and of being about to retire into the ranks, the Comité Central felt keenly the subordinate position to which it was reduced by its comparative insuccess at the elections. *It* had wielded the real revolutionary power—the National Guards—and it was determined, come what might, to maintain its authority in that direction. Not blind to the slur that would be cast upon it were it openly to repudiate its published declaration, it declared itself dissolved, but immediately formed into another Comité,[2] and there was no change in it, save that wrought by the election of some of its members.

The Hôtel de Ville was crowded with Guards, who smoked, drank, and ate with the utmost freedom and licence within the halls and corridors of the stately edifice. The elected members of the Comité Central, when arrived at the Council Chamber, found numbers of the other elected ones waiting for them, prior to commencing the sitting[3]—a significant indication that the Comité Central, as such, was still haloed round with importance, and the fact was not lost upon them.

There were then about sixty members present. The duty of commencing the proceedings was allocated to the oldest member; this was Charles Beslay, a man seventy-seven years of age, who, besides being *doyen* of the Commune, was, perhaps, also its richest member. By profession he was a civil engineer, and had constructed railroads in France and Switzerland. He had often before been elected a representative of the people.

Beslay's opening discourse contained one statement only which it is needful to refer to. He was defining the functions of the newly elected body, and stated "that the Commune

[1] Lefrançais, p. 179. [2] *Rapport d'ensemble*, p. 42.
[3] Lefrançais, p. 179.

would occupy itself with that which was local—the Government with that which was national";[1] but, by implication, neither had any right to interfere in the peculiar domain of the other. Paris will govern itself—it will not brook the interference of Versailles in its internal affairs.

The assembled Commune first passed a vote of thanks to the Comité Central for the part it had taken in recent events. It next proceeded to discuss the question of drawing up a proclamation to the people. The discussion became disorderly and confused: in the midst of it Oudet started up and demanded in stentorian voice the arrest of Tirard, one of the former mayors, on the ground that he had been an accomplice in the capitulation of Paris by not having resigned his mayoral office in protestation against it. Delescluze, sitting next to Oudet, pulled that inopportune zealot to his seat again, and after a while the former discussion was resumed. Then Allix, one of the four persons who had received a less number of votes than the eighth of the electors, demanded to know whether he was to consider himself elected or not. Allix was a highly nervous individual, who had gained notoriety by a theory he had propounded some years before for procuring communication between friends at a distance. His theory was based upon a presumed sympathetic action of snails. It became the amusement of Paris for months, and its author a laughing-stock, which circumstance, however, did not prevent him posing as a friend of the people, and enlisting, in the recent elections, a small number of suffrages. A member of more account than Allix was in the same predicament—this was Raoul Rigault, who also asked if his election was to be considered valid. Because instant unanimity upon this question was not apparent, Allix became hysterically excited, whereupon Eudes, arrayed in his uniform of General, ordered him out, and the proceedings then calmed down.[2] The law which enacted that an eighth of the voters was required in order to validate an election, dated from 1849; upon this fact being mentioned, the assembly held that the Commune was not bound by any laws save its own, and it immediately declared the four elections which were in dispute to be valid. As a matter of

[1] Lefrançais, p. 182. [2] *La Vérité*, p. 325.

abstract right, any community may pass a law in the morning and repeal it in the evening, and if it may do this with its own offspring, it certainly may with that which it has merely inherited; but the inexpediency, and in fact absolute impossibility of continuing for long such a procedure, cannot be doubted. Happily, the Commune of Paris did not intend so sweeping a change as the universal application of the principle it had thus laid down.

Apropos of the question of validation, it was subsequently suggested in this sitting of the Commune, that none of its members could belong also to the National Assembly. Several of them did—Delescluze, Pyat, and Gambon; Ranc, Cournet, Tridon, and Malon had, but had resigned. Delescluze combatted the suggestion, and it was dropped.[1] Another proposal was made that the Commune should constitute itself at once into a Council of War, in order more effectually to maintain its existence, and to propagate its principles. This suggestion was received with loud applause, but it was not discussed, nor any formal decision upon it taken.

From the foregoing it is evident what was the general impression of the members of the Commune as to the functions and position of the body to which they had been elected—that it was not a municipal council, but an independent state. Constituting itself superior to the laws of the country; alleging incompatibility betwixt being Communal and National Assembly representative; the suggested Council of War, which could be indicative only of the intention to prosecute war against their fellows at Versailles—an intention intolerable in a council presumably elected to form a municipal administration only. The National Assembly and Thiers had thrown down the challenge by repudiating the legitimacy of the elections, and the Commune had speedily taken it up—it would maintain its position as an independent Government for Paris, and was determined not to submit to other authority.

Tirard had waited only for this inclination to become manifest; it now being so, he arose and stated that he resigned his membership of the Commune, on the ground that never, in all

[1] *La Vérité*, p. 325.

the negotiations with or proclamations of the Comité Central, had there been any mention, or in his mind any thought of the proposed elective body being other than a municipal one pure and simple—it was now given a distinctly political character, and he had no mandate from his electors to form part of it. Paschal Grousset and Jourde angrily questioned Tirard—Was he for or against the Commune? Had he not said at Versailles that persons entering the Hôtel de Ville ran the risk of being assassinated? Tirard answered his interlocutors with firmness—The Commune was against him, Versailles was against him: that was enough. The words he had used were, "When one enters the Hôtel de Ville, one is not always sure to go out." Again Delescluze diverted an awkward discussion—the projected proclamation was rebrought forward and presently Tirard went out, unmolested.[1]

The Tirard incident had ruffled the Communal mind—was it to become public? If so, would it not display the new legislators in an intolerant and unruly guise? They were at their first corporate gathering—who could foretell what incidents subsequent meetings might unveil? The general question of the publicity or secrecy of the Communal sittings was thus brought to the fore and was debated with animation. There were advocates for both courses; appeals to patriotism, to elementary rights, to the danger of too much speaking following publicity, and the danger of dictatorial action following secrecy; finally, a vote was taken, the result of which was in favour of secret sittings. There should be published no reports of debates, but merely the decisions taken.

Thus the self-vaunted enlightened Commune of Paris, which contemplated accomplishing such herculean labours as the complete overthrow of wealth's tyranny, the entire abolition of poverty, the institution of absolute equality, the removal of all injustices and the inauguration of a bright and glorious era which should perfect the principles of the great Revolution, and form a new landmark in the history of the world, was, at the outset of its career, enamoured of darkness, unappreciative of the truth that all Nature works in the light of day, and that

[1] *La Vérité*, p. 326. Lefrançais, pp. 184, 185.

man, metaphorically and literally, can healthily advance and work only in the light.

Neither did the Commune apprehend the actual impossibility of closing the mouths of each one of its members—the contingency of having traitors in its midst, or an admixture of weak people who cannot keep secrets, or ambitious ones who serve personal interests by divulging them. Between which and others, little of import transpiring in the secret sittings of the Commune has failed to become public knowledge; there has chiefly been veiled and concealed only the lowness of tone exhibited by many members, the inelegance of the language employed, the petty animosities indulged in, and the verbosity of the speakers. It is charitable to pass lightly over these defects. The delinquents were often not men of polish nor of great education; it is merely, for the sake of historical completeness, needful to mention them. The Comité Central meetings had frequently been turbulent and uproarious, characterized by none of the dignity and self-control that one expects to find in authoritative assemblies; the Commune, though it reached a higher level in this respect than its forerunner, still left much to be desired. It is, however, not by its debates, but by its decisions and actions, that the Commune, as all other bodies and persons, must be judged, and for this purpose all necessary information is at hand.

At the conclusion of the Communal sitting the proposed proclamation to the people was still unfinished. Lefrançais, Jules Vallès, and Ranc were deputed to draw up one, which they did, but it was too mild in tone, and was rejected the next day when placed before the assembled Commune. At this second meeting Lefrançais was elected President of the sittings for a week; Ranc and Vaillant, assessors; Antoine Arnaud and Ulysse Parent, secretaries. These officers all came to be changed almost daily, so that there was never a real President of the Commune—that was contradictory to the assumed equality of the members—but merely a temporary chairman.

At this meeting the duties of providing for the due administration of the city of Paris, and for maintaining the army of federates, were allocated to various Commissions, which were as follow:[1]—

[1] Lefrançais, pp. 193, 194.

Executive.—Eudes, Tridon, Vaillant, Lefrançais, Duval, Félix Pyat, Bergeret.

Military.—Pindy, Eudes, Bergeret, Duval, Chardon, Flourens, Ranvier.

Finance.—V. Clément, Varlin, Jourde, Beslay, Régère.

Judicial.—Ranc, Protot, Léo Meillet, Vermorel, Ledroyt, Babick.

Police.—Raoul Rigault, Ferré, Assi, Oudet, Chalain, Charles Gérardin, Cournet.

Labour and Commerce.—Malon, Frankel, Theisz, Cl. Dupont, Avrial, [Loiseau-Pinson,] Eugène Gérardin, Puget.

Food.—Dereure, Champy, Ostyn, J. B. Clément, Parisel, Emile Clément, Henri Fortuné.

Exterior Affairs.—Delescluze, Ranc, Paschal Grousset, Ulysse Parent, Arthur Arnould, Antoine Arnaud, Charles Gérardin.

Public Works.—Ostyn, Billioray, J. B. Clément, Martelet, Mortier, Rastoul.

Education.—Jules Vallès, Goupil, Urbain, Lefèvre, A. Leroy, Verdure, Demay, Robinet.

The functions of each of these Commissions were generally, but not precisely, determined; there were none amongst the Commune who had the necessary experience to lay down rules, and who possessed the requisite authority to insist upon their observance, for the prevention of overlapping and conflicting duties. There was also no absolute chief denominated for each department, though several members, already appointed to the same posts by the Comité Central—whose appointments were invariably maintained—were tacitly acknowledged to be supreme. Thus, Jourde in Finances, Protot in Judicature, Rigault in Police, Paschal Grousset for Exterior or Foreign Affairs, were left practically masters of their respective departments. The Executive Commission was meant to be the intermediary by which the decisions of the other Commissions should be enforced—it had a general power, but its duties were not more clearly defined than the others.

By means of these Commissions nearly all the members of the Commune were provided with administrative labours. One

member, Loiseau-Pinson, following Tirard's example, on the 29th resigned his seat; others, who had never sat, sent in formal resignations, making, in all, fifteen out of the twenty-one members of the Démissionnaire class. The six remaining in the Commune were Ranc, Parent, Goupil, Fruneau, Robinet, and Lefèvre.

After the appointment of the various Commissions, the Commune set itself to deal with some of the questions which lay before it. The remuneration of its members was fixed at 15 francs per day, the pay of the federates at 2·25 francs per day, the cash for these disbursements still coming largely from the coffers of the Bank of France, which continued to suffer under the thinly veiled threat of force. The old man Beslay, of the Commission of Finances, interviewed the acting governor of the Bank, with whom he had some previous acquaintance, and advised him not to attempt resistance to the demands made upon him.[1] Beslay understood the risk which the Bank ran, and desired to avert any calamity. From this date he became delegated by the Commune to the Bank, and his moderate and friendly attitude towards it was of incalculable value.

Another decision taken by the Commune was to abolish conscription for the army; henceforth, the results usually attained by compulsory enlistment were to be secured by the more politic method of persuasive flattery. "All able-bodied citizens make part of the National Guard. No other force than it can be created within or may be introduced into the city." So ran the decree, breathing another blast of defiance to the Versaillais.

The citizen army and the poor were the chief charges upon the Commune; by the one it had been elected, whilst the trials of the other had, in an appreciable degree, contributed to produce the existing state of affairs, and those who benefitted therefrom could scarcely do else than mitigate the dire straits of the numerous persons who were sufferers by the dislocation and stagnation of trade. Two acts of amelioration, which the National Assembly would have talked over for weeks, and probably then have rejected, were enacted by the Commune by simple decree: the sale of unredeemed pledges in the pawn-

[1] Du Camp, t. iii. p. 168.

shops was suspended, and all tenants were relieved from the payment of rents for the October, 1870, January and April, 1871, terms. The latter was a crying need to some, unrequired by others; the broad simplicity of the decree drew no distinctions.

These decrees, which so swiftly cut the Gordian knot of red-tapeism, were almost as brief in contents as the resumés here given, and were signed merely, "The Commune of Paris." Who were responsible for them? The entire Commune; the intention being to sink individual differences and let the majority act as if it were the whole body, by which course the minority officially sanctioned what it really condemned. The design was full of a superior morality; of a sense of duty that was not earthly, yet could never, with this particular body, be esteemed heavenly. Aerial theory drawn into mundane dwellings—it is too light, it will fly up again to its own free and unrestrained abode! Men cannot be governed by beautiful theories.

The task to which the Commune had at first addressed itself —a proclamation to the people—was eventually, after much deliberation and many emendations, completed. It does not concern us—professions of faith and promises are alike valueless in repetition: the Commune was a revolutionary body, and all revolutionists have great hopes and immense plans. The main feature about this revolutionary assembly is that it wields a huge power and possesses the second city in the world: it has an unexampled chance to realize the revolutionary dream. If it be but united in itself! The resignation of the fifteen members who were republican but not revolutionary has helped to consolidate the seventy who remain, nevertheless there are ominous signs of discord existing. The Comité Central had issued another proclamation to the people, forestalling the communal one. It was unexceptional in tone,[1] but it publicly revealed the fact that the Comité had not retired into the ranks, that it still held sway over the federated Guards and showed no intention of relinquishing its authority.

The Military Commission appointed by the Commune consisted chiefly of Comité Central men; those that were not, were

[1] Lefrançais, p. 199.

friendly towards it. Three members of this Commission—Eudes, Bergeret, Duval—formed part also of the Executive; it was to give these three the chief power over the National Guards, for, being at once Comité Central Generals and Communal military and executive chiefs, there could be no questioning their authority from either point of view. None of these three had had any military training, save what they had obtained during the siege; they, however, possessed the confidence of the federates, which went for much, and were intensely hostile to the Versailles Government—a fact which told greatly in their favour with the Commune, as precluding the possibility of traitorous dealings such as Lullier had indulged in.

Against treachery and spies the Commune was continually on its guard. Rigault was a huntsman of keen scent for persons of this description, and his watchful eye was over many who thought themselves free from suspicion. The Commune was not without traitors in its midst, for, though the Versailles Government had ceased to have direct communications with the usurper of authority in Paris, it was regularly supplied with accounts of its secret sittings from the beginning.[1] Besides this, there were innumerable persons in Paris who were devoted to the Government cause, and who freely risked their lives by engaging in plots and intrigues having for their object the overthrow of the Commune. The chief commandership of the National Guard, an office still unfilled, was coveted by a general of the regular army, one Franzini, who pretended to the federates to be wholly devoted to them, but who really hoped to be able to utilise the position, should he obtain it, to the profit of the Versaillais.[2] Applications for authority to secretly represent Thiers in Paris already came to that high official from various quarters; he was so averse to turning away any assistance, that nearly all the requests were more or less vaguely entertained and indefinitely granted. Hitherto, personal transit betwixt Versailles and Paris had been tolerably easy of accomplishment, but the wealthy people of the capital had become alarmed at the course of events and were in rapid exodus, by reason of which Raoûl Rigault caused the gates of the city

[1] Du Camp, t. iv. p. 19.

[2] Dalsème, p. 21.

to be closed and exit to be obtained only by passports issued by his department. The awe which this man had already inspired by making numerous arbitrary arrests of gendarmes and others, whose only crime was that of refusing to bow down to the Communal Baal, was such that for would-be fugitives to go near him, was equivalent to entering the lion's den: many of them prudently declined to take the risk. After this it became more difficult to quit and re-enter Paris; however, the agents of Thiers, as well as many persons who were determined to quit the city, attained by subterfuge, bribery, or disguise, what it would have been highly dangerous to attempt effecting in a straightforward manner. The federates, even to the officers of battalions, were short of money, and few of them refused to be corrupted when they could secretly, and for apparently trivial purposes, receive a douceur.

The Commune was aware of communications having been received from the Versailles Government by some of the officials who, after the 18th, had remained in their respective departments, and whose assistance the Comité Central and its successor had been glad to accept in order to expedite the work of reorganizing the services. It now, by decree, prohibited, under pain of dismissal, all public servants from receiving any orders or messages from Versailles. Before, however, this decree and Rigault's passport regulations could be fully carried into effect, the head of the postal department in Paris, with his staff and his postal registers, had secretly departed for Versailles under instructions from the Government, and Paris was left without either postal or telegraphic services. Loud was the complaint against this desertion of so important a branch of public work, and a deputation of merchants and traders went to Versailles to petition M. Thiers to permit the renewal of the service; but the head of the Government was obdurate and not prepared to grant the least favour or convenience to Paris: the merchants were obliged to come away unsuccessful. The Commune appointed of their members, first Vermorel, then Theisz, to reorganize the posts, the latter of whom did so with considerable ability, and in two days communication within Paris and the outskirts was to some extent restored. In other public departments, however, confusion and disorder were still rampant.

Perhaps the most notable and important disarray was evidenced in the administration of law and justice. Judges were not to be seen, cases were not proceeded with; Justice seemed to be robed in mourning and was unapproachable. The judicial Commission appointed by the Commune had not yet reorganized the Courts—only two of its members, Protot and Meillet, were connected with the Law; they were both young barristers and neither had had large practice. The control of the Police, so fruitful a source of injustice if in injudicious hands, was unfortunately in Rigault's, whose intellectual ability was undoubtedly considerable, though it unhappily included a masterful unscrupulousness.

An ameliorating influence to the abnormal activity of the last-named personage must be taken into account. M. Bonjean, the President of the Court of Cassation who had been arrested by Rigault on the 21st, had contrived to cause to be sent to the regular officials and attendants at the various prisons in Paris instructions to remain at their posts as long as possible, so that they might watch over the prisoners brought there under Communal orders.[1]

The innuendo which lay beneath this was already amply justified. Arrests under the Commune were being made without justification—Bonjean's and others, under the Comité Central regime, were but preliminary indications that a reign of intolerance was about to be inaugurated. The Communal body as a whole was intensely hostile to religious influences, and it delayed not to give its opinions practical effect at the outset of its existence by suppressing all ecclesiastical services, functions, or payments that were under its control, and appropriating to its use all Church effects that it conveniently could. This preliminary administrative measure was speedily followed by a formal decree, separating the Church from the State and nationalizing ecclesiastical property. Theoretically, a State should not favour one class of its citizens more than another, —a tenet which a constitutional connection with the Church undoubtedly thwarts: the Commune rudely wished to transform theory into reality, regardless of the practical difficulties

[1] Du Camp, t. i. p. 68.

which bristle around this subject. All rational Government can only be a compromise betwixt conflicting interests; but the Commune would have no compromises—it would have only its own will and that to the full.

The realization of its wishes in this direction was confided to Rigault, than whom no more zealous servant in such a cause could be found. To him, priests, prayers, and preachings were abominations; already he had arrested a priest named Blondeau, without legitimate reason, and, fortified by Communal sanction, the arrest of priests became henceforth a daily occurrence. In other ways than this, individual liberty and the possession of property were, within the region of Communal authority, become precarious treasures. Upon the least exhibition of disobedience or opposition to Communal demands, forcible seizure was made both of persons and goods. On the other hand, the Comité Central, in the last hour or so of its undisputed sway, had decreed, and the Commune had adopted, both bodies from the ardency of their devotion to the principle of individual liberty, the abolition of legalised prostitution,[1] a thing which, whatever may be said about it in England, has at least the merit of keeping the streets of a huge capital clear from unabashed solicitation. The effect of the Communal action in this matter was to open the flood-gates of prostitution, and to produce a state of things immeasurably worse, from a social point of view, than that which it terminated.

The rapid succession of these decrees, by which changes of some magnitude were thrown amongst the Parisians, caused a sense of bewilderment and unreality to pervade the minds of all citizens who were not Communists. To the federates and other followers of the new power the decrees were so many sops and boons, though they, having the administration of the city, the preservation of order, and the honour of their army to account for, needed firm and hardy treatment instead of indulgent gratification. The indiscipline which had characterized so many of the National Guards during and after the siege continued with unabated virulence, though it took other shape. Rigid obedience, faithful performance of duty, carefulness to

[1] Du Camp, t. iv. p. 13.

avoid excesses, were as much as ever wanting, whilst individual initiative bubbled up in all manner of ways, unauthorized, irrepressible, conflicting, pernicious, and tyrannical. Such disorder reigned in the arrondissements that the Communal delegates located in the respective mairies were unable to make headway with the accumulation of work owing to the unreliable humanity which was at their disposal for its furtherance. It became imperative that men of greater authority should administer even these local duties, and therefore the Commune decided that henceforth its members should control and be responsible for the respective arrondissements which had elected them. This decision threw a treble burden of labour upon the people's elect, for they had still to attend the Communal daily meetings and to transact the business of the various Commissions to which they were attached. With almost every established system broken up and nearly everywhere new employés to perform and new masters to direct work that both alike were unaccustomed to, it is not surprising that something—nay, that much—was neglected or improperly done, that confusion continued to reign, and, as a necessary consequence, that hardships and injustice were inflicted upon numerous persons who were entirely innocent of having caused so great dislocation.

April 1st. Nevertheless, though there was such a large volume of practical work to get through, the Commune found or made time to discuss at considerable length the question of the freedom of the press and of association, this subject having been raised through the suppression, by Rigault, of the *Figaro* newspaper, the only offence of which had been to express opinions emphatically against the Commune. Many members of the Commune, under the reign of Napoleon III., and even during the last nine months, had suffered various penalties or imprisonments for press and association offences. In those days they had advocated the entire freedom of expressed thought and full liberty to band themselves together as their own desires dictated—now came the opportunity for passing a decree to give these views effect. The debate being ended, the decision, by raising of hands, was arrived at; it was not unanimous, but surprisingly opposed by nearly as many as supported it—voting by raising of hands seemed not clear and impressive enough for

so important a principle; voting by individual appeal will be made to-morrow: until to-morrow, then, be the decision deferred.

The same day that witnessed the suppression of a literary adversary saw also an augmentation of the Commune's literary strength, in the person of M. Henri Rochefort, who, for some time past, had been in the provinces in ill-health. He now returned to Paris to resume, under more revolutionary auspices than usual, the direction of his journal, the *Mot d'Ordre*. The next day this paper demanded the demolition of the statue of Marshal Ney, the old soldier who was so attached to the fortunes of the first Napoleon. Why not? Did not the highly respectable Government of the National Defence upset the statue of Napoleon himself and throw it into the Seine at Neuilly?

Along with their hatred of things Napoleonic the Communists apparently forgot that they, at that moment, by the first necessity, were militants. A Napoleon, a Marshal Ney, would have been of incalculable service to them. Had they not an immense army of 200,000 National Guards, that, like all else public in the city, was out of joint and ructious, its training of the loosest, obedience of the slightest, and indulgence of the grossest character? These National Guards did not yet realize their position, nor the possible duty they might be called upon to fulfil. It had been, hitherto, the comedy—but will there not be a tragedy in the play? One of the most beautiful armies that France has ever seen, according to M. Thiers' eulogy, is now congregated at and around Versailles—what is its business, Communists, but to deal death and destruction amongst you? Are you prepared to do the same with it, or do you not in your inmost hearts expect the walls of your enemy's ranks to fall down at the blow of your trumpets, as the walls of Jericho are said to have done of yore? Or have you still a thought that somehow your position will be made regular and your actions indemnified? If so, banish it, for the historian of the modern rival of Hannibal and Alexander has learnt from the great occupation of his literary life the virtues of at least one attribute — an uncompromising firmness. Thiers may have lacked perception of the true state of affairs at Paris a few weeks ago, but, his eyes being at last fully opened, his determination on the main point has been taken and is inflexible.

However, though Thiers be like adamant, there are elements about him that are plastic; conciliation with Paris is still advocated by many deputies who shrink from the horrors of a war with their own countrymen. A step must be taken which will show that Thiers' rigidity is real and not sentimentally optimistic—which will clinch the issue and render ridiculous, if not impossible, any further idea of compromise. Moreover, Thiers has received reports from Paris that the Comité Central meditates taking some action against Versailles.[1] Be it—he will be first in the field.

Upon the bridge of Neuilly, nearly two miles from the Paris fortifications, and elsewhere in the same neighbourhood, the federates have erected barricades. They are an offence—they will retard the sometime advance upon Paris; they must be demolished. Go then, Vinoy, with your Daudel brigade, your Gallifet chasseurs, and your republican Guards, break down their barricades—and retire; the march on Paris is not yet.

On Sunday morning, April 2nd, Vinoy, from the heights whereon stands the Fort Mont Valérien—so narrowly escaped from being in the federates' possession—directed and viewed the operations. At half-past eight o'clock a detachment of gendarmes was sent forward to the bridge, where they came upon the federates' advance post. The gendarmes summoned the federates to retire, and an army surgeon named Pasquier, who was with the former, went forward, unarmed, to induce the federates to comply with the demand made upon them. The latter shouted, "Vive la Commune!" and asked Pasquier and his gendarmes to come into their ranks—a request which was refused, whereupon a federate drew his revolver and shot Pasquier dead. The gendarmes fired, the federates replied with energy and were reinforced; the gendarmes fell back to give place to the soldiers of the line that were massed behind them. These, on their way to the bridge, passed the Courbevoie barracks, where also were federates. The latter turned out, raised the butt ends of their guns in the air, and shouted, "Vive la République!" "Vive la Commune!" But these men of the line were obdurate; they fell not down, like the walls of Jericho,

[1] *Rapport d'ensemble*, p. 52. *Le* 18 *Mars*, p. 272.

at a shout, but turned smartly upon the federates and fired a volley into them, causing them to flee precipitately. They rushed into houses, from the protection of which they returned the fire. The gendarmes had also refuged themselves in houses, and took part in the conflict. The federates, who had followed the retreating gendarmes, were obliged to fall back upon the bridge; but at this point a stubborn stand was made, and fighting lasted for an hour and a half before the Versailles troops eventually broke down the resistance. Then the cannons and mitrailleuses from batteries on Mont Valérien opened fire upon those Communists that were still inside the houses, and finally dislodged them. At mid-day the fighting was over; the barricades were taken, and the federates who had defended them were in full flight for Paris. There were killed and wounded on both sides—not a great number, but enough to show that the tragedy had commenced—that the comedy, if it ever existed, must now vanish from every mind—Communal or Versaillais.

When the sound of firing reached the ears of the Parisians, it awoke them from the dream of nonchalance which had erewhile clouded their senses. They knew not how the fighting went, but they knew that the dreadest of all armed struggles—civil war—was once again upon them. Presently news arrived from the scene of conflict. Victory! It was doubted. The firing still went on. Anxiety was in every heart, and the morning wore on amidst trepidation and hope, and the turning out into the main thoroughfares of the entire force of federates, waiting and expecting the order to be sent forward. At last the arrival of fugitives at the Maillot Gate, and then of retreating battalions, put the true state of affairs before them. Rage and indignation leapt to the federates' faces at the cowardly aggression, as they termed it, of the Versaillais. They demanded, clamoured, from one end of the city to the other, to be led at once against their enemies. At the Hôtel de Ville all was commotion and excitement. At two o'clock the Executive Commission issued a lying placard to inflame the passions of the citizens—out of charity, set down the lies to ignorance and to the agitation of the moment. The drums beat the call to arms; couriers ran hither and thither with orders which often conflicted; batteries of guns were moved towards the ramparts, and provisions and

ammunition were served out to the troops. A feverish animation possessed the federates, and every heart seemed eager for the fray.

The Executive Commission met again at three o'clock. To decree the confiscation of whatever property existed in Paris belonging to the chief ministers at Versailles—Thiers, Favre, Picard, Dufaure, and Pothuau—and to declare these statesmen accused by the Commune was an easy task, and Rigault was entrusted with the execution of the mandate so far as concerned the material effects. But what to do with the federate army swarming in the streets? The Executive were not in accord on this question. There was the military and Comité Central element, Eudes, Bergeret, and Duval, young and impetuous men, who demanded an instant march upon Versailles: the battalions were enthusiastic for it, and their wishes must be respected. On the other hand the civil element, composed of Lefrançais, Tridon, Vaillant, Pyat, the first and last of whom were men of mature years and varied experience, counselled less hasty action. They said to the three militants: Reckon first your forces; know what you have to dispose of, what arms, what stores, what accessories; understand where reserve munitions are to be obtained; make all preparations with care and thoroughness, then proceed to Versailles. These civilians were four against three—the majority, and they accordingly ordered the minority to carry out their commands.[1] The Commission separated, after which the three generals made underhand efforts to win over to their views the two young civilians, Tridon and Vaillant. In this they eventually succeeded,[2] whereupon, without consulting the other two members, an immediate march to Versailles was resolved upon. This was the easier of accomplishment seeing that the Communal Delegate or official head of the War Department was Eudes, who had been appointed thereto only the day previously by a decree which also suppressed the position of Commander-in-Chief of the National Guards. The latter step was taken to avoid jealousy betwixt the various prominent Communal officers, several of whom considered themselves qualified to act as supreme military chief.

[1] Lefrançais, pp. 218, 219.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 223.

Brunel, appointed General by the Comité Central on March 24th, had adopted the title of "General-in-Chief," but his supremacy was short-lived, for he attempted to cancel an order which the Comité Central had transmitted to the chiefs of legion without his authority, and he was immediately divested of his office.[1] If there was, therefore, any chief at all at this moment, it was Eudes, who combined Communal and Comité Central, civil and military authority, and with whom Bergeret, Duval, and other popular National Guard officers were in complete accord. Under these circumstances, and with the streets of Paris thronged by a mass of citizens eager to wreak vengeance upon their foe, a march upon Versailles was quickly realizable.

Bergeret at once proceeded to Neuilly, where, the Versailles troops having retired, the Communists had recrossed the bridge. Presently a telegram was received at the Hôtel de Ville from Louis Félix Henri, a Communist staff colonel and a former military officer—whose services to the new cause had been of great value, stating that Bergeret *himself* was at Neuilly. No need for further alarm when Bergeret was in command! Federates who failed to perceive the grotesque flattery of the message were comforted with the thought that a great general was amongst them.

The night was too near at hand to permit of anything being done that day, therefore the Champs Elysées, the Boulevards, the Grande Avenue de Neuilly were turned into camps, bivouac fires were lit, food and wine consumed, and the dark hours passed away amidst sleeping, dozing, or talking, until the early break of the Monday's dawn gave the signal to march.

April 3rd. Then the immense armed throng arose, shook itself, and set off upon its journey, each battalion under the leader of its choice,[2]—this under Bergeret, that under Duval, others under Eudes or Flourens. They had their officers—again their own elect. Orders were frequently given, but obedience was lacking, and the marching array was disorderly;[3] entire battalions were still under the influence of the previous night's imbibing.

An incident that occurred during the early morning illustrates

[1] *Rapport d'ensemble*, p. 53. [2] *La Vérité*, p. 335. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 336.

the sort of discipline which prevailed. The chief of legion of the 17th arrondissement was one Louis Nathaniel Rossel, who had been a Captain of Engineers in the besieged army at Metz, had escaped from thence after the capitulation, was made Colonel by Gambetta, but reduced to his former rank by Thiers, in indignation at which he deserted the Government army and, on the 20th March, entered into Paris and offered his services to the Comité Central, who accepted them. Rossel was a man of capacity, ambitious and spirited, though, like so many Communal leaders, of immature age, being only twenty-eight years old.

The troops under Rossel's direction had to march during the night from Paris to Courbevoie, there to join Bergeret and Flourens in the morning. On the way, a groundless alarm caused some of his men to fire their guns, recklessly wounding and killing some of their comrades; then a battalion discovered it had had no cartridges served out, and for a long while it blocked the way in ill-humour; many of the men were the worse for liquor. These facts presently induced Rossel, who, as a practical officer, knew the unreliability of such men for serious warfare, to sound a retreat. He was suspected of treachery and arrested by his subordinates, then by others released; again arrested, and again released. A third time Rossel was arrested, and on this occasion he was taken back to the mairie of the 17th arrondissement, and thence to the Hôtel de Ville; at the latter place he was appreciated and understood, and was immediately and definitely liberated.[1]

Such was the discipline prevalent throughout the Communal army. The officers whose military training had been the mushroom growth of six or seven months, were indulgent to their men and were therefore admired; those who had served as soldiers for more than as many years had the greatest difficulty to procure anything like the obedience and order to which they had been accustomed; they were often, as in Rossel's case, wrongly subjected to suspicion and insult.

Nevertheless, if this huge camp of armed men caracoled in a loose rein and lacked the control of the bit, it supplied by its own superabundant enthusiasm the spur and the whip. The

[1] D'Esbœufs, pp. 52–58.

federates were full of confidence and eagerness—both feelings, however, being somewhat due to reports which had been carefully disseminated to the effect that the regular army was disinclined to fight and at heart wishful to join them; also, that the fort Mont Valérien, within range of which the bulk of the Communist forces must pass, was friendly towards them, or at the worst simply neutral. Félix Pyat was the chief authority for the first impression;[1] as to the second, Lullier, before his arrest, had declared it[2]—Bergeret, even now, reaffirmed it,[3] though both the Comité Central and the Commune knew that the guns of the fort had opened fire against them at Neuilly the day before.

The army was formed into four divisions, the first, in order of position, being headed by Flourens, whose route to Versailles was to be to the north side of the fort Valérien, passing Courbevoie, Nanterre, Reuil, and Bougival. Bergeret's was the second division, taking the east side of the fort, and passing Neuilly, Courbevoie, Puteaux, and Buzenval. Duval's was the third division, practically out of range of the fort, and taking a more southerly route, *viâ* Sèvres and Chaville. Southernmost of the four divisions was Eudes', which was to go *viâ* Fort Issy and Meudon. All were to unite at Versailles, and simultaneously attack the enemy there. The plan was Bergeret's.

It was a little before seven o'clock in the morning when the first two divisions—which had made a junction at Courbevoie—separated and got fairly under way on their respective routes. Flourens' was nearly a mile away to the north side of the fort Valérien; Bergeret's about half a mile off on the southern side. The fort was absolutely silent and seemed lifeless. The troops of the second division marched on in a long, thin, but closely knit line in the best of spirits; soon some thousands of them had passed the fort, whilst many more thousands were

[1] Lissagaray's *History*, p. 161. English edition. This is the only statement in Lissagaray's account which I have utilised. The whole of my work was written before I made any acquaintance with Lissagaray's, and after perusing the latter perhaps halfway through, and finding practically nothing within it but what I had in greater detail from other sources, I deemed it unnecessary to finish reading it.

[2] and [3] Lefrançais, p. 221. *La Vérité*, p. 336.

coming on. Suddenly two batteries of guns in the fort were unmasked, and a tremendous fire swept the mass of humanity below, in an instant cleaving the line in two and laying dead numbers of the unsuspecting federates. Shells burst amongst them, and the crackling mitrailleuses effected enormous destruction before the surprised Communists could make any attempt to get out of the range of fire. Those who had passed the fort set off at a run—not for Versailles, but round about towards Flourens' route. The others behind it turned back and fled, shouting, "Treason! treason!" Bergeret, drawn in an open carriage by two horses, made some endeavours to stay the panic, but they were ineffectual, and, his horses getting shot, he also deemed it prudent to seek a place of safety. Thus ended the campaign of the second and most numerous division.

The men of the first, under Flourens, were unmolested by the fort, but they heard the roar of its guns, and were greatly disquieted thereby. Before long some flying fugitives came upon them, and the disaster to Bergeret's division was made known. Flourens' men, straggling and scattered, hurried on, hoping to cross the Seine at Chatou, only to find on arrival there that the bridge had been cut. Dismayed, incoherent, without leadership or discipline worthy of the names, the battalions rushed hither and thither, seizing every available path whereby to return to Paris, other than that which had brought them. Versailles troops, hitherto concealed in the fort and upon the heights, now emerged and pursued the discomfited Communists, taking several hundreds of them prisoners. Flourens was compelled to fly whither he could with only one officer, an Italian named Cypriani, to accompany him; these two concealed themselves in a house at Reuil, from an upper window of which Flourens presently perceived a gendarme, who had tracked them to their refuge. Flourens fired, but the gendarme was not alone; his comrades entered the house and into the room where the two Communists were. Flourens shot at the first comer and wounded him, but the next instant the captain of the gendarmes, one Desmarest, with a single sword-stroke split Flourens' head in twain.[1] To this quixotic revolutionist

[1] *La Mort de Flourens*, par Auguste Hardy, p. 6.

be paid the homage which is due to sincerity and to that devotion to an espoused cause which leads to and ends in death. Flourens' companion, Cypriani, was wounded in the fray and taken prisoner.

A few of the fugitives had managed to get across the river by means of boats. At a house in Chatou three of them were eating in fancied safety, when the Marquis de Gallifet and two squadrons of chasseurs suddenly pounced upon them. By this general's orders the unfortunate trio were immediately shot, as an example, he declared, which he hoped would be salutary.[1]

Duval's division had reached the heights of Meudon, and an advanced post even got to Chaville, within a mile or so of Versailles, but it and the main body were speedily encountered and driven back. The fighting, however, went on all day, and on the Communist side there was great loss. Many of the prisoners taken by the Government troops, being deserters from the regular army, or known to appertain to the criminal class, were immediately shot.[2]

Eudes' division had a similar experience to Duval's. Both divisions, at the fall of the day, were forced to take refuge either behind the extensive earthworks at Châtillon, which had been formed originally for service against the Prussians, or in the forts Issy and Vanves which were in the neighbourhood. These forts were found to be too inefficiently supplied with arms to be of any use save as a cover for a retreat.[3] The Versailles troops were reinforced in the afternoon, but the augmentation came at too late an hour to be utilised with effect, and hostilities were consequently suspended until the next day. The Communist soldiers, commanded by Duval and Eudes, had fought with considerable courage and endurance, but the superior organization and training, the equal courage, and the sometimes ferocity of their opponents were elements which in every direction told heavily against them. The supplies of provisions and war stores from Paris were also extremely defective, these necessities arriving either too late or at the wrong place.[4]

The news of the disaster which had befallen Bergeret's column arrived at the Hôtel de Ville about nine o'clock, and several

[1] *Un Officier*, pp. 227, 228. Lefrançais, p. 215.
[2] *Un Officier*, p. 130. [3] and [4] Lefrançais, p. 222.

members of the Commune who were there at once went to the ramparts to endeavour to restore confidence and order in the ranks of the fugitive battalions—a work which was difficult of accomplishment. Later in the day the death—assassination it was called—of Flourens became known, and created a profound sensation. Nevertheless, lying reports of victories were received and propagated, and only those persons in official positions had any real idea of the state in which the federate army was. The Commune assembled during the day, and withdrew the military commandments from Bergeret, Eudes, and Duval, for having embarked, without authority, on such an enterprise, and a new delegate of war was appointed in place of Eudes. This was the Franco-American Cluseret, who at the time was at the War Office as Eudes' chief of staff. The three degraded generals were also removed from the Executive Commission, on which they were replaced by Delescluze, Vermorel, and Cournet. From this Commission, Lefrançais, disgusted at the deception practised on him by his colleagues, retired, and was replaced by Avrial.[1]

The general diversion of attention to the military position outside the city profited Lullier by permitting him to escape from prison—an escape really connived at by the Commune, which was not yet without hope of turning Lullier's military capacity to account. Lullier gathered a band of his adherents around him and remained in Paris, but he adopted at once a defiant and braggadocio attitude towards the Commune, and as a consequence any utilisation of his services by it was out of the question. At the time of Lullier's escape another leading Communist had just been imprisoned. This was Assi, a member of the Commune, friend of Bergeret, and occasionally chairman of the Comité Central. His arrest was undertaken at the instigation of Rigault for no other reason than that he—Assi—had opposed any idea of marching upon Versailles, and also thought that the Commune was exceeding its functions.[2] The time for half-measures, in the Communal opinion, was gone, and those in favour of such could not obtain a fair hearing for their views, and even their personal liberty, as in this case, was jeopardised.

[1] Lefrançais, pp. 223 and 224.

[2] Du Camp, t. iii. p. 79.

Early in the morning of April 4th, the battle between the Versailles and the federate armies was resumed. Duval, with great energy, several times endeavoured to seize the plateau which crowned the village of Châtillon, but he was as often repulsed, and the artillery fire from the Versaillais told with terrible effect upon his men, the main body of whom retired from before it, leaving their leader, his staff, and about 1,500 federates to be surrounded by the Government troops. The 1,500 Communists, seeing the hopelessness of resistance, laid down their arms and were taken prisoners. At the Petit Bicêtre, on the way to Versailles, to which place they were at once sent, they were met by General Vinoy, who asked if there were any chiefs amongst them. Duval at once stepped forward, saying he commanded; his action was followed by two under officers. Vinoy ordered a firing party to be formed, directed the three Communists to pass over towards a house, the front of which, singularly, bore the inscription "Duval, Horticulteur"; they obeyed without hesitation, and placed themselves against the wall of the house; the firing party followed, performed its duty, and the dead bodies of the three officers were thrown into a ditch that was near.[1] The remainder of the prisoners were conducted to Versailles, where their arrival was hailed with much satisfaction, and their persons assailed with much abuse and contumely, repeated efforts being made by the populace to wreak summary vengeance upon them.

The defeat of the federate forces was decisive and unqualified; the dismay, the looseness of formation, the destroyal of all conceited notions of their own greatness and invincibility, were such that if Thiers had instructed his generals to march at once upon Paris, the city would have fallen an easy prey to him. Instead of doing this, he contented himself with maintaining his positions in the suburbs, cannonading the western ramparts of Paris from Fort Valérien, and husbanding his resources with the intention of striking a final blow at a later date. Audacity is often mistaken for strength, but where there is strength, boldness increases it; it remains to be seen what became of Thiers' alternative of prudence.

[1] *La Vérité*, pp. 342-348. *Un Officier*, p. 133.

At Paris the defeats became generally known, notwithstanding that the Commune suppressed three journals[1] which had been giving truthful accounts of the operations. Perverted versions of the fighting appeared in the *Journal Officiel*, and the heroic deaths of Duval and his companions were again referred to as assassinations. Other papers revelled in the most vulgar language, expressive of the intense hatred towards the Versaillais which had now taken hold of the Communist breast. The members of the Commune, no less than their humbler followers, were stung with the defeats inflicted upon them at this first trial of strength, and were further maddened by the evident refusal of the Versaillais to hold sacred the lives of prisoners captured in combat. They could not yet chastise their foe, but they would intimidate him by a measure of retaliation which should force him to stay his hand. Rigault's anti-clerical vigour had already been productive of the imprisonment of about a dozen priests, who were not of special eminence in their calling; now, acting upon the instructions of the Executive Commission, he seized the Archbishop of Paris and his sister, Monseigneur and Mademoiselle Darboy; Monseigneur Surat, the Vicar-General of Paris; the Abbé Deguerry, curé of La Madeleine, and other ecclesiastics of high standing—the most notable and beloved in Paris—and incarcerated them in the Dépôt, whence they were subsequently removed to Mazas prison. At the same time the houses of most of these priests were sacked. The arrests were made upon the flimsy pretext that the persons inculpated were opposed to the Commune. The charge was perfectly true—the unfortunate priests had already every reason to be opposed to the new authorities. The real object, however, in arresting such important personages was to keep them as hostages, whose lives could be sacrificed at any moment should the Versaillais continue to refuse the ordinary clemency of war to their prisoners. Archbishop Darboy, in particular, was seized as an equivalent to Blanqui, who was still in Thiers' hands, and overtures were soon made to the latter for an exchange of these two individuals; the Communists lacked a man of power to guide

[1] *Le Journal des Débats, Le Constitutionnel, Paris-Journal.*

them, and Blanqui was esteemed to be such and was earnestly wished for. Thiers, however, would not part with the revolutionary chief, even to place the Archbishop at liberty.

April 5th. Notwithstanding the civil warfare now actually opened, and despite the arrests of the priests, there were still in Paris men of position and intelligence who hankered after effecting a compromise between the combatants. Of these conciliators the principal were some of the mayors and deputies who had signed or had formally approved of the agreement made with the Comité Central; they formed themselves into a league, with the title of The Republican Union for the Rights of Paris. A body of merchants, with a similar object in view, did likewise. The former group convoked a meeting at the Bourse for the 6th for the furtherance of their project, but it was promptly prohibited by the Commune. The latter declared that conciliation was treason; more clear-sighted on this point than the well-intentioned but feeble would-be mediators, it knew that at Versailles there was no thought of concession, and that there were but two alternatives open to it—absolute submission, or war to the end. The Commune had already gone too far, and the idea was too repugnant to it, to contemplate the former; only the latter remained, and it, as all civil wars, threatened to terminate, as it had begun, without mercy. The Commune was aware of the risks it ran, and accepted them. Neither should there be any doubt as to its determination to be quits with its adversary. Led by Rigault, Ferré, and Ranvier,[1] it formally declared by decree that any person suspected of complicity with the Versaillais would be immediately arrested and impugned before a special jury of accusation, which should state whether or not the prisoner was to be considered as a hostage; those adjudged to be hostages would be liable to be shot, in the proportion of three to one, for every prisoner that was summarily shot by the Versaillais. The priests already arrested, and others that came to be arrested day after day by the unremitting energy of unscrupulous Rigault, were detained as hostages clearly enough, though they were not, as the decree stipulated, brought within twenty-four hours before a jury to

[1] Du Camp, t. i. p. 75.

have the question of their liberty or detention decided. They were persons innocent of any crime whatever against the Commune, and their arrests were made in defiance of all modern civilized procedure, even as it exists in times of war. So strangely does the wheel of Destiny revolve, bringing in its course Injustice like a Nemesis. Often, in anterior periods, had ecclesiastical authorities perpetrated glaring acts of injustice and intolerance, causing the innocent to suffer, and blinding themselves by an infatuated zeal for the cause they represented; now the wheel of Life has turned, and their successors are become innocent sufferers at the hands of men as frenzied and as intolerant as was ever priest or pope. Take heed, ye men of strong persuasions—which is naught but narrow-mindedness—life is an equal balance, and it will have its measure for measure, if not in one age, in another. The intolerance of one sect is and shall ever be compensated by that of another. Priestly oppression has had its day, but the reverse has not yet come, as it will; be assured that it will come.

The arrests of the priests and the decree of the hostages decided several members of the Commune, who had with great diffidence participated thus far in its career, to sever their connection with it. These were Ranc, Ulysse Parent, Robinet, Lefèvre, Fruneau, and Goupil. They resigned; their resignations complete the list of démissionnaires given on page 144. Ranc stated that he would continue to serve the Commune, though he re-entered the ranks. He was a man of some power, a friend of Gambetta, and had been, socially and politically, the most considerable personage in the Commune after the resignation of Tirard. His withdrawal and that of the other five members lessened whatever moral strength appertained to the Commune by removing from it its most moderate and sensible elements. On the other hand, these latter-date démissionnaires at best were men who did not fully know their own minds; they were timid, fearful, and irresolute. The Commune needed not such, and, by their abandonment of its conclaves, it gained in homogeneity, though it was, alas! far from possessing unity. Another member, Félix Pyat, one of the most violently aggressive and revolutionary, equally cowardly and despicable, anxious above all things not to jeopardize his

safety, had some days before wished to leave Paris,[1] so as to escape from the responsibility for actions which he, as much as any one, had contributed to produce. His colleagues, however, suspected his poltroonery, and refused to permit his departure.

Not only in the high places of the Commune was there trepidation at the turn which affairs had taken. There was great eagerness among the federates to relinquish the duties of soldier, which had so suddenly become dangerous, and lacked the halo of success. The desertion of their cause was unexpectedly facilitated by an order which Cluseret, the new Delegate of War, had promulgated immediately upon his accession to that post. This was that all unmarried men, aged from seventeen to thirty-five, should form part of the battalions; there followed a rapid voluntary elimination of the married and the elder men from the ranks, who were glad to seize such an opportunity for withdrawing. The order was speedily replaced by another, altering the limit of age from nineteen to forty, and applying to married as well as unmarried men. But the depletion of the force had taken place, and it was impossible to secure the return of all who had left it. Even many who were inside the limits of both these orders contrived secretly to evade service.

The defeats of the 3rd and 4th had caused the Commune to alter its military plans; it no longer meditated marching upon Versailles, or even engaging the regular troops that were encamped in the suburbs nearer Paris. Cluseret opined that Paris was impregnable—had it not withstood the Prussians?—and the Executive Commission agreed with him; therefore they would remain on the defensive, they would drill and reorganize their forces, and meanwhile solicit aid from the great republican towns of France, which were known to have a kindred feeling for them. Already Amouroux, one of their number, had been sent to assist in the movement at Marseilles; but his utility at that famous town was slight, and the revolution there had been quelled a few days after his arrival. From Marseilles there was little to hope for; there still remained the other large industrial towns, and Paschal Grousset, whose

[1] Lefrançais, p. 251.

office of Foreign Affairs was practically a sinecure—the Commune having no relations with exterior powers, save the very undiplomatic connection with the Versaillais—occupied himself in endeavouring to establish communications with the provincial revolutionary centres, to induce their inhabitants to rise against the National Assembly, and to support Paris: occupation which, it may at once be said, was of barren result, thanks to the watchful and now unhesitating energy of Thiers.

The latter was aided in his campaign against the capital by the Communal decision to remain on the defensive. It permitted him to consolidate and reinforce his troops, to mature his designs without serious disturbance, and left him at liberty to strike a blow at his own time. The federates had rebuilt the barricades on the bridge of Neuilly, and were installed there in such force as Bergeret, who still commanded, considered sufficient to withstand any attack. These barricades the Versaillais determined to overthrow once for all, and on the 7th, Good Friday, the bridge was once more attacked. The federates made a bold defence of their positions, but they were outnumbered, overpowered, and forced back upon the fortifications of Paris. The latter were shelled by the guns of Fort Valérien; a battery of guns was also erected on the bridge, and by it the whole avenue to Paris was swept, devastating the houses, and rendering it impossible for the Communists to secure any shelter whereby to cover a readvance. As a result of this action the Versailles troops took up a nearer position to the city, and did not relinquish it. Apparently because of the over-confidence which had resulted in failure to maintain his positions at Neuilly, Bergeret was removed from his command. His staff protested; Bergeret refused to be removed, and he was therefore arrested. Underneath this arrest there lay more than was generally known. Bergeret, a man full of ignorant egotism, without an atom of ability, had ambitious ideas inconsistent with loyalty to the Commune. These were known to Cluseret and the Executive Commission, and they seized upon the Neuilly repulse as a convenient pretext for putting the conceited general out of the way.[1]

[1] Dalsème, pp. 51, 52.

Though this disputer of authority with the Commune was somewhat easily displaced, it was not so with another, which worked more insidiously and effectively than vulgar, unastute Bergeret. The Comité Central, controlled chiefly by Edouard Moreau, a man of intelligence, and whose more active members were G. Arnold, Boursier, Josselyn, Piat, Lisbonne, and Lacord, still maintained its influence over the federates, partly through being, like them, unmilitary and also by indulgently pandering to their wishes, the result being that little could be done by the Commune save what it agreed to. It had even, unasked, sent a delegation to the Ministry of War, to assist in the official transactions of that department, and neither Cluseret nor his chief of staff, Rossel, nor the Commune Executive, dared to provoke an open conflict with the Comité by forcibly repelling its unwelcome representatives. The Comité further interfered with the exaction of rigorous discipline, which Cluseret and Rossel knew to be essential if a fighting force of any account were to be obtained from the disorganized and disobedient federates. In the Commune the Comité Central had many friends amongst the Internationalists, whilst there was so little real unity in the other members of that body, and so little general comprehension of the necessity of such qualities as self-sacrifice, subordination, consolidation of and respect for authority, that it would have been in the highest degree unlikely that any emphatic condemnation of the Comité could have been obtained from it. Thus affairs went on, the Commune ordering and the Comité Central, in so far as the federates were concerned, controlling; this course of conduct being subject only to two modifying influences: Parisian public opinion, and the undoubted fact that both authorities were in pursuit of one great object—the defeat of the Versaillais.

The position of commander in the west, rendered vacant by the imprisonment of Bergeret, was conferred upon one of the many foreign officers that were in the Communal army. This was a Pole named Dombrowski, forty-five years of age. He had taken part in the Polish insurrection of 1863, and, during the late siege of Paris, had distinguished himself to Socialistic eyes by his military criticism of General Trochu's efforts to raise the siege, for which performance he was imprisoned by the

Government of the National Defence. That he had military capacity was as undoubted as that he was courageous and active, and his promotion to what was the principal military command in the federate forces was well merited.

There were many Poles besides Dombrowski in the Communal ranks; they were all men of much better calibre and knowledge of warfare than the members of the Comité Central, and their services generally were appreciated, though occasionally the federates raised a brief outcry against the employment of foreigners in responsible positions. The Communal leaders, however, advocated the admission of foreigners to their service, not merely because of their utility, but on the higher theoretical ground that the Commune was a Universal Republic which recognised no distinction of country or race. The Commune, nevertheless, drew a very firm line against religions and adverse politics, so that its professed universality was never anything but an empty sound.

April 10*th.* Whilst the combatants, each for similar reasons, remained on the defensive, and the only actual fighting was of a skirmishing nature in the west at Neuilly, and, occasionally, in the vicinity of the forts in the south—to the command of which Eudes had been appointed—the Commune busied itself in putting into practice, as far as it could, some of the principles which, in times of less responsibility, its members had pinned their faith to. The widows and children of the federates who had been killed in the recent fighting demanded consideration. They were without resources; it was fitting that they should be provided for. A decree was voted, unanimously in this instance, giving to the widows a pension of 600 francs (£24) per year; to each of the children under eighteen years, 1 franc per day (£14 12*s.* per year), also pensions to other dependent relatives of the deceased.[1] This was a generous measure, and it largely helped to prevent the disintegration going on in the battalions. There was a feature in this decree, however, that, as emanating from any considerable authority, was absolutely novel in Christian lands. "Widow" signified the wife who had been duly married, and also the woman who had lived with the deceased without the sanction conveyed by

[1] Lefrançais, p. 244.

legal or ecclesiastical ceremony — children of both kinds of unions were classed together as equal. The social habits of the Parisian people were thus broadly indicated, and "Free love" received a civic sanction. There were political as well as abstract reasons for this course. It was essential to avoid offending the numbers of National Guards and women who lived together without marriage, and desirable also to distribute relief without discriminating in such a matter—and how could one discriminate when there was equal poverty and had been equal reliance upon the unfortunate dead? The abstract influence was the wish to strike a blow at religion, its ceremonies and its intrusions into all the affairs of life.

The existing members of the Commune, without exception, were anti-religious, most of them intelligently so—convinced that a belief in the supernatural is not in accordance with modern knowledge, and, if not, religions which are professedly revealed must be untrue, and therefore of a baneful influence. By which logical considerations the Commune was moved to condemn and, as far as it could, to prohibit religious exercises and forms. It thought it was advancing the general welfare—ridding the world of superstition and inaugurating, for a second time and permanently, an Age of Reason. It specially desired that children should be educated only in regard to matters of fact, and not in philosophical and doctrinal subjects, so that when the young mind became mature, it might choose for itself what its beliefs should be. Pursuant to this idea, the Commune expelled from many schools the teachers of religion, and removed objects that recalled theological dogmas. Its opinion of the clergy generally was that they were "accomplices of the crimes of monarchy against liberty," and some adherents of the Commune hesitated not to stigmatise them as bandits and assassins.[1]

Raoul Rigault, the most zealous of secular zealots, experienced no compunctions or qualms when arresting priests and Church functionaries—which arrests continued, each day adding to the number of ecclesiastics in prison. Who could hope for consideration when the Archbishop had been arrested? Neither were the churches spared whose ministers had been imprisoned.

[1] *Le 18 Mars*, pp. 291, 292.

They were taken possession of by an irreverent populace; the religious adornments were torn, broken, or disfigured; plate and valuables were confiscated to the use of the Commune; clubs were formed within them, and were frequented largely by women, who were often addressed from the pulpit by members of their own sex, of whom Louise Michel and Paule Minck were the most widely known; the people generally went to these churches in their ordinary attire and with perhaps less than their ordinary decency of behaviour—they ate, drank, smoked, spat, shouted, laughed, vulgarly discussed events, and conducted themselves with the utmost uproariousness and disregard for the associations of the buildings they had invaded. These proceedings were sanctioned by the Commune, notwithstanding that it had again published a declaration to the effect that it absolutely guaranteed individual liberty and liberty of conscience. So inflated do some persons become with the names of grand things, that they mistake the appellation for the thing itself!

April 12th. Religion was not the only nightmare upon the Communal brain—Napoleonism was another. The revolution of the 4th September had swept away the Imperial dynasty and most of its relics, but there still remained one gigantic monument in Paris testifying to its former existence and greatness; this was the immense column, 152 feet high, in the Place Vendôme, which had been erected to the glory of the grand army of Napoleon I. The Commune had virtually decided to uproot the Vendôme column on April 6th, whilst smarting under the sting of the defeats inflicted upon it by the Versailles troops, whom it stigmatised as the slaves and emissaries of a despotic monarchy, and therefore closely allied to an Imperial despotism. This decision was now publicly announced. So gigantic an act of suicidal vandalism had perhaps never been committed in the world's history, but it is due to the Commune to state that it did not originate the idea. That discredit remounts to the year 1848, and to that respectable but unpractical theorist, Comte; it had been revived quite recently by other respectables, of whom one was the minister Picard; another was a painter named Courbet, whose artistic sympathies were not repugnant to the suggested destruction of an artistic work;

a third was the leading writer of a very unrevolutionary paper, the *Journal des Débats*.[1] These patriotic people evolved their benign aspirations shortly after the deposition of Napoleon III., and it has been seen that the members of the Government of the National Defence were not superior to sanctioning a detestable prejudice, by themselves overthrowing and casting into the river one Napoleonic statue, whilst two others were, under their auspices, removed from their places and put away. Though these statues were of trivial size compared to the huge column of the Place Vendôme, the principle involved was the same, and, much as the Commune desired to take to itself all the dishonour, which it thought to be honour, of initiating an entirely new line of action, it was merely a copyist on a daring scale. The decree for the demolition of the Vendôme column was signed on behalf of the Commune by Félix Pyat. It was read generally with incredulity; the anti-Communists felt sure that the speedy entrance of the Versailles army into Paris would prevent the possibility of putting it into execution.

The Government troops were now placed under the supreme command of Marshal Macmahon, who, on April 11th, had a total force of about 110,000 men, including therein a large cavalry force. His chief generals at this date were Ladmirault, De Cissey, Vinoy, and Du Barail, each in command of an army corps. The plan of operations which Macmahon laid out for accomplishment consisted in seizing first the Fort Issy, which commanded the entrance into Paris by the gate Point du Jour, and then to force an entrance through the latter.[2] Here at once is seen the folly which Thiers committed in evacuating all the forts, which, instead of being auxiliaries of considerable power, were become active and weighty combatants to be subdued. The gate Point du Jour was on the north bank of the Seine, in a neighbourhood (Passy) friendly disposed towards the Government, easy of access from the outside, and close to the sheltering woods of Boulogne. The bulk of Macmahon's army was intended for service in this direction. A portion of his forces were, however, retained further north, at Neuilly and

[1] Larousse. [2] Macmahon, p. 3.

Courbevoie, where, on the Communist side, Dombrowski commanded. The Polish general stubbornly held his position against the regular troops, though he was being gradually forced to retire nearer to Paris.

The Commune anticipated that the eventual main attack would be made upon the western side of the city, though it knew not the precise point at which it would come. It erected batteries of guns in that quarter, by which to vanquish their foe, should he succeed in forcing an entrance. It also meditated forming a second line of defence inside the ramparts by means of barricades—it had a Commission of Barricades, over which Rossel or Cluseret presided, largely for this purpose. It even thought of undermining the streets near the fortifications with explosives and firing them by electric current,[1] but its scientific knowledge was at fault and the design ever remained in an embryo stage. There was, however, a Scientific Delegation of the Commune, the head of which was Parisel; it investigated the composition of explosives, and called to its aid a noted chemical expert named Borme, who, devoted to the Versailles cause, quietly, though not without danger to himself, foiled the attempts made by his Communist employers to obtain a highly explosive compound.[2] There were other adherents of the Government in Paris, secretly serving it whilst professing to serve the Commune. One, De Montaut, was the friend of Urbain, the member of the Commune, to whose intermediation he on several occasions owed his life—for the avocation of spy in the midst of an enemy is ever hazardous. Thiers had many emissaries in Paris, who kept him informed of all that occurred, and who made repeated efforts to bribe Communal officials, so as to facilitate an entrance into Paris by surprise—a project that was greatly encouraged at Versailles. Money was disbursed or promised freely; extensive, sometimes "full," powers were given to various officers who thought themselves able to circumvent the Commune in its lair. Plans were designed with a looseness and haste which augured ill for their success, and, as a result, the National Guards in Paris who remained faithful to the Government, were distributed under almost multitudinous

[1] Du Camp, t. iv. pp. 220, 221. De la Brugère, p. 155. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 157.

clandestine commands, and not a tithe of them knew what the others were doing.[1] The Commune also had its spies, who were under Rigault's direction, and by means of them various minor plots and intrigues were intercepted and nipped in the bud.

Rigault's department of Police was, apart from the actual conduct of the war, the most active and the most important under the Commune. There were so many suspicious persons to watch, antagonistic ones to arrest, and perquisitions to make! Rigault could imprison almost whom he willed. A well-known Mexican banker, called Jecker, injudiciously went to the Prefecture of Police to obtain, under a false name, a passport wherewith to leave the city. He was recognised, and Rigault immediately ordered his arrest. That was on the 10th April. On the 13th, Gustave Chaudey, journalist and former deputy mayor of Paris, was also arrested. Chaudey was charged with having ordered the fire upon the people from the windows of the Hôtel de Ville on January 22nd. He was imprisoned as an ordinary criminal, which meant that even less consideration would be shown to him than was shown to the hostages. His arrest was directly due to the malevolence of the Communist journal *Le Père Duchêne*, edited by Eugene Vermesch, which revived the false charge against Chaudey and demanded his incarceration. Other Communist papers also hounded on their leaders to adopt extreme measures, utterly regardless of consequences or of justice, excepting that to their jaundiced and purblind sight, whatever they advocated might seem to be just. The *Mot d'Ordre*, Rochefort's organ, was incessant in pointing out houses and establishments where perquisitions should be made. The *Cri du Peuple* (Jules Vallès) was like a hungry hyæna, thirsting for the blood of the Versaillais; and the *Père Duchêne* was equally unrelenting, and lashed itself into a frenzied advocacy of intolerance. These papers were widely read by the federates, and had an unmistakable influence upon them. The population of Paris at this period was largely composed of ill-educated and unreflecting people, who had suffered enough real personal and national wrongs to create hatred against the Versaillais, and whose greatest fault was a too ready

[1] Dalsème, throughout.

acceptance of dangerous opinions and counsels, from men who had ever rebelled against authority that was not their own. The ill example set by the Commune in making unjustifiable arrests and perquisitions was followed in many quarters of the city by persons of lower grade. The federates were armed—resistance to their demands was folly, and they had their way, supplementing their more legitimate income by extortions of wine, food, and clothes, whenever the officer commanding thought necessary. Some over-active subordinates also made arrests, generally of former gendarmes, sometimes of spies or refractories, and, in one case, of a batch of priests. The prisoners thus brought to Rigault were never straightway set at liberty, and thus the eager enthusiasts in the Communal cause were encouraged to act upon their own authority, and to look to the Commune merely for its official sanction to accomplished facts.

The batch of priests referred to were arrested the same day as Chaudey. They belonged to the Convent of Picpus, situate in the east end of Paris. The original mover in this matter was one Fenouillat, who was commonly called Philippe, which was one of his christian names. Philippe was the chief of legion of the 12th arrondissement, and upon his own initiative he surrounded the Picpus Convent and searched it. The convent was composed of two adjacent but distinct buildings, one for the monks and the other for the nuns—a conjunction which less acrid beings than was Philippe would be disposed to consider of a suspicious character. The priests, to the number of thirteen, were arrested and at once removed ; the search in their building was productive of little of interest. In the nuns' habitation, however, various discoveries were made, the rumour of which presently resounded throughout the city. Parts of human skeletons were found, as well as instruments alleged to be for torture, and others said to be for the procuration of abortion. Of even worse signification were three females, who were in a state of mental derangement, confined in cage-like huts. These things were considered by the federates, by Rigault, and by Protot, the Minister of Justice, who personally came to examine into them, to prove beyond a doubt that the monks and nuns were guilty of immoral practices, and resorted to abortion and secret burials to prevent discovery ; that not only were tortures

employed, but also forcible violation of women, and furthermore, that persons were kept imprisoned within the convent walls under conditions so grievous that they became insane. Thereupon the federate population of Paris became animated with intense indignation against the priesthood, and religions and their devotees fared even worse than before. That portion of the people which was not revolutionary but reactionary—an incorrect designation—felt that the tales of the Picpus atrocities were false; but, at the moment, it was impossible either conclusively to refute them or even to obtain a calm hearing for what might be urged against their credibility. The explanations given of the various discoveries were that the skeleton bones were remains from the convent burying ground, were at least a hundred years old, and had appertained to adults who had died naturally; that the instruments were for legitimate surgical and therapeutic purposes only, the inmates of the convent ministering to the infirm and deformed; finally, that the three crazy women had been idiots when received into the convent, and were maintained in a manner medically suited to their condition. The absolute truth or untruth of all the federates' contentions has never been determined, though some of them were undoubtedly the product of malignancy, and were erroneous. The main facts to remember are, that thirteen Picpus priests were imprisoned, and that federate Paris was convinced they had been horrible criminals.

On the same day that the Picpus Convent was surrounded, the safety of the Bank of France was menaced, in a manner more threatening than hitherto. The Commune had found official documents evidencing that the Bank held the Crown diamonds, which were worth an immense sum of money. What belonged to the Crown, belongs now to the nation, or to Paris, thought the Commune; we must have those diamonds. It sends Jourde, Varlin, Amouroux—who had returned from Marseilles—and Beslay, supported by a strong force of federates, to demand that the diamonds be given up. The Bank replies it has not got them, and is then shown the official documents, which prove, as emphatically as paper can, that the diamonds are there. The Bank's sincerity is suspected, altercation and threatening murmurs break out from the federates,

and there is no knowing what terrible calamity may happen. The diamonds—where are they? Have they been secretly removed beyond the Commune's reach? By dint of much persuasion and assistance from Beslay, it is eventually agreed to wait until the next day, and in the meanwhile to communicate with Versailles, and ascertain if it knows where the precious jewels are. Thus is the danger averted, and on the morrow it is discovered that the diamonds had been sent out of Paris long before the Communal era, to place them out of the way of the Prussians. The explanation is satisfactory, the Commune is appeased, and the Bank's position continues intact.[1]

Up to this date the sittings of the Communal body, in accordance with their original resolution, had not been officially reported. Accounts, however, which often varied with one another, and which made public the existence of personal animosities and amenities within the supposed secret conclave, had appeared in some of the revolutionary papers. Publicity, therefore, having been found to be inevitable, was at last officially recognised, to the extent of declaring that reports of the sittings should in future be published in the *Journal Officiel*. These reports were much condensed, and they frequently glossed over or omitted altogether "scenes" and language which it was deemed impolitic to reproduce. The Commune, moreover, manifested a liking for resolving itself into a secret committee whenever anything was to be discussed relative to the military situation; on such occasions the reports abruptly terminated. The public was never admitted into any of the sittings. The first sitting officially reported was that of April 13th; among the members present was Assi, who had been imprisoned on the 1st, and was liberated on the 11th.[2] The reasons for his release were twofold: 1st, there had never been any sufficient cause for imprisoning him; and, 2nd, the Commune was on the eve of applying for fresh sanction and support from the Paris electorate. The resignations of the twenty-one members of the démissionnaire class; the seven duplicate elections; an error made in regard to the 19th arrondissement, by which it had been deprived of a representative that was its due, and the deaths of Flourens and Duval, had

[1] Du Camp, t. iii. p. 196.

[2] *Ibid.*, t. i. p. 80.

rendered thirty-one Communal seats vacant. The elections to fill up the vacancies had been postponed from time to time, owing to the unanticipated defeats which the federate army had sustained ; they were now fixed to take place on Sunday, April 16th, and were eventually held on that day.

The Commune was in bad odour with the more reputable portion of the population, owing to the numerous summary arrests and perquisitions : in view of the elections, it announced that the arrests would be controlled, and Assi, who had some following amongst the working classes, was released. The announcement referring to the arrests was not made in good faith, but merely to serve political ends. Unauthorized perquisitions by federates were made to such an extent that a decree was issued by Vermorel prohibiting them, and threatening with imprisonment those who participated in them ; this had followed on an order from the Director of the Intendance prohibiting the requisition of wines —which had been without effect.[1] Thiers' house in Paris was searched, and his papers seized ; the Marquis de Gallifet's house also, and seizures made there ; these were both on April 14th. As to the arrests, so little was the promised control realized, that, on the day of the elections, one vigorous Communist, Le Moussu, a friend of Rigault's, but acting without instructions, closed most of the churches in Montmartre, and arrested numbers of their clergy. His deeds were sanctioned and confirmed by the Commune. At one church, which had been forcibly occupied, even a funeral cortège was refused admittance.[2] Religious liberty had become so precarious under this brief reign of the would-be Universal Republic, that people who would have gone to church were afraid to do so ; so many priests had been heedlessly imprisoned, that others might be excused for wishing to avoid a similar fate ; many churches were without ministrants, and thus throughout almost the whole of the immense city there was a suspension of religious services. The day was inauspicious in another sense. A party of federates, acting, as was customary, on their own initiative, had invaded the Belgian Consulate, made perquisitions, and even organized a ball within it.[3] Had it been in any other house, the event

[1] Du Camp, t. iv. pp. 119, 140. [2] *Ibid.*, t. iv. p. 197.
[3] *Journal Officiel*, April 18th.

would have passed without reprimand from the Commune; as it appertained to a foreign power, an immediate redress was undertaken, and an apology given.

Such were the events, and such the Sunday on which the supplementary elections to the Commune were held.

There was amongst the electorate no eagerness to vote, amongst the prominent revolutionists no anxiety to stand as candidates—for several of the vacancies there were, in fact, no candidates. Those who were voted for, excepting Garibaldi, were already in the thick of the Communal fray, and merely emerged a little more into public notice. The total number of voters was so small—about one-fifth of the whole, there being in several instances less than the prescribed eighth—that the Commune was placed in a dilemma. The conservative instinct in humanity is too strong to be easily cast aside, either at the dictates of reason or of expedience, and the Commune, notwithstanding its self-elevation above anterior laws, and its precedent validation of elections that were not in accordance with those laws, could not bring itself quickly or unanimously to validate those of the present series that were under the eighth. There were only eleven elections which were beyond dispute, though even these were barely above the required eighth; the rest were considerably below. The Commune, by a majority of thirteen out of thirty-nine members, decided to validate all elections where a simple majority of recorded votes had been obtained. It is interesting to know who these thirty-nine Communists were, and how they voted on this question, for it broadly shows who were inclined to act with the strong hand, and who with some regard to legality.

Voted for: Allix, Amouroux, Ant. Arnaud, Babick, Billioray, Blanchet, Champy, E. Clément, Delescluze, Demay, Dereure, Frankel, Gambon, Paschal Grousset, Jourde, Ledroyt, Martelet, Malon, Meillet, Protot, Ranvier, Régère, Rigault, Urbain, Vaillant, and Varlin—26. Against: Arthur Arnould, Avrial, Beslay, Clémence, V. Clément, Géresme, Langevin, Lefrançais, Miot, Rastoul, Vallès, Verdure, Vermorel—13.

Upon the principle thus sanctioned the following were elected: Vésinier, Cluseret (twice elected), Pillot, Andrieu, Pottier, Serailler, Durand, Johannard, Courbet, Rogeard,

Sicard, Briosne, Philippe (Fenouillat), Lonclas, Longuet, A. Dupont, G. Arnold, Menotti Garibaldi, Viard, and Trinquet—twenty persons, of whom Garibaldi, Rogeard, and Briosne never accepted their respective elections; therefore the real addition to the Commune was seventeen persons, bringing up the available total of that body to seventy-nine. Rogeard and Briosne were editors of Félix Pyat's paper, *Le Vengeur*, and their refusal to accept a seat in the Commune was probably due to Pyat's influence.

Of the seventeen new members there pertained to the *Comité Central*, G. Arnold, Pottier, Viard; *Committee of the twenty arrondissements*, A. Dupont, Cluseret, Johannard, Longuet, Pillot, Sicard; *Journalists*, Vésinier, Andrieu, Longuet; *Speakers at Club and Public Meetings*, Trinquet, Durand, Serailler, Philippe, Lonclas. Serailler, Johannard, Durand, and Pottier also belonged to the Internationalist Association.

Courbet was the painter already referred to in connection with the Vendôme column. He was a man of supreme vanity and sententiousness, of some ability as an artist, but devoid of imaginative power and refinement. There was another painter in the Commune—Billioray.

The results of these elections, and especially the small number of voters, afforded great satisfaction to Thiers and his *entourage* at Versailles. It was evident that the people of Paris generally did not support the Commune now, though they had undoubtedly done so on March 26th. Notwithstanding this comparative certainty before him, Thiers delayed making a decided attack upon the city because he was still not confident of possessing an irresistible army, and, ever cautious, he temporised until additional troops should have arrived wherewith to increase the force already under Macmahon's command. Thiers was hopeful also—these elections seemed to support the idea—that the longer the final struggle was delayed the weaker the Commune would become, and the easier and with less bloodshed vanquished. The Versailles army was not, however, passive. It dug trenches at Châtillon, and erected batteries to play upon the forts; the telegraph lines and the Orléans railway were cut, and offensive preparations so far advanced in the southern region that the Communal authorities ordered all the gates and roads on that

side of the river to be permanently closed. At the northern side a point of vantage, the Château de Bécon, near Courbevoie, was seized on April 17th by the Versaillais; it was immediately placed in a state of defence, and batteries erected in the grounds.

These and other slight engagements, not followed by any definite result, had put the Communists upon their mettle, and, by that best of all teachers, experience, had produced in them greater coherence and stability. The swift punishment inflicted upon Duval, Flourens, and others—the terrible and not wholly untrue reports which arrived as to the complete heartlessness with which their comrade-prisoners were being treated by the Versaillais—a recognition of the fact that there was an end to the desertions of the regular soldiers, that there was no longer a raising of butt ends in the air and no more cries of fraternity and accord, coupled with the violent and unscrupulous language of their leaders, who knew that only by a decisive Communist victory could their own lives be rendered safe: all conduced to form in the federate ranks an envenomed hatred of the Versaillais, which developed as time wore on and which was met by a corresponding animosity from their foe. Each to the other was held up as a trampler on the rights and liberties of the people, and every opprobrious term that a heated and malignant imagination could bring forth was utilised by both parties, wherewith to carry scorn, scourge, and ridicule.

The uncompromising spirit that animated the combatants was shown by the contempt thrown upon the efforts of the Conciliators both at Versailles and at the Hôtel de Ville. Delegates of the Peace Unions were indeed received at both places, but Thiers was insistent upon the Commune yielding up its pretensions and laying down its arms, whilst the Commune, by means of its official journal, merely stated that it had no answer to make to their representations.

Meanwhile the Commune, amidst the confusion of war, the arrests and perquisitions, the dishevelled condition of the administrations and a fresh suppression of four journals,[1] attempted to realize one more of its political ideals. On April

[1] 18th April: *Le Soir*, *La Cloche*, *L'Opinion Nationale*, *Le Bien Public*.

17th it decreed that the workshops which had been temporarily abandoned (owing either to the siege or to the Commune) should be handed over to the workmen's co-operative societies for their common benefit. It was a step towards another socialistic goal—property to belong to the State and not to the individual. There again the Commune took no heed of the multitude of difficulties which would beset the rational prosecution of such a plan—if it can be rationally pursued. The entire civilized social structure, which, though only a mental edifice, is more durable, more valuable, more strong than all the material structures which man has made, rests upon the individual possession of property. The day may come when this condition of things will be reversed, but the reversal cannot be accomplished in a few hours, nor a year, nor perhaps a century. Great changes, whatever may be their nature, to be safe and reliable, must and will be of slow progress—exceedingly slow, compared to the span of life. The Commune was ignorant of such truths.

The practical result of the decree anent the abandoned workshops was of slight account, for pressing military requirements prevented the full execution of it. Cluseret's administration of the War Department was being adversely commented upon. The federate forces were being slowly, yet it seemed surely, thrown back. There were no gains to act as a set off to their losses. The reorganization still left many grievous faults unremedied, the commissariat and the war supplies being extremely defective. Moreover, bodies of armed men were formed without authorization, and appeared more terrorising in manner than the ordinary battalions. There were "Avengers of Flourens" and "Avengers of Paris," composed mainly of roughs and wastrels. "The Children of Père Duchêne" was the euphonious title for a body of vagabonds, arms in hand; "Scouts" of various names and "Turcôs" of the Commune were other recently formed battalions, in addition to "Free-shooters," "Volunteers," and "Defenders." These and other bodies roamed about the city at their own fancy, and, though unauthorized, had no difficulty in obtaining the usual pay of the federates. To check some of the abuses which resulted from this state of things, and from the general insubordination and indiscipline, Cluseret

thought the institution of a Court Martial would be of use; by his wish, Raoul Rigault, in the Commune, demanded authority to establish one. It was granted; Rossel, a martinet for discipline, was appointed president of the Court, and full powers, from the death penalty downwards, to it were accorded.

Another military measure taken the same day—17th—was to order a house-to-house search, for the ostensible purpose of preventing the secret entrance of arms, but really to disarm any National Guard who was hostile to them. The Commune also completely stopped the further exodus of persons who came under the military regulations, whilst even those who did not could only get passports by giving indisputable evidence that they were needed.

On April 18th the Commune issued a decree relative to bills of exchange and other fiscal notes, the payment of which, suspended during the siege, could now be legally demanded, though trade and commerce were still so out of joint that few debtors were able to meet their obligations. It was necessary to do something to legalise the unavoidable and general inability to pay, and the Commune ordered that within a period of three years, starting from the following 15th July, all debts should be paid by twelve equal, quarterly instalments. It was an ample delay—greater even than the pressing occasion required. The next day a Communal manifesto appeared in the *Journal Officiel*, endeavouring to reason the world into its own way of thinking, and concluding with the statement that the present conflict could "finish only by the triumph of the Communal idea or by the ruin of Paris." On the 20th the Labour Commission decreed the abolition of night work in the bakeries—a course which pleased a few, but offended many of the bakers in whose interest it was adopted.

On the last-named date the Commune altered its administrative and executive system. That hitherto employed had been found to be unsatisfactory, owing to there being an almost complete absence of definition of functions of the various Commissions,[1] and to the inability of the members to attend both to their central and local duties. It was also considered desirable

[1] *Journal Officiel*, April 21st, 22nd.

that the recently elected members should participate in the official work of the Commune. Furthermore, it was found that the Executive Commission, as hitherto existing, was superfluous, for it could do nothing that did not properly belong to the functions of some other Commission. A complete readjustment and alteration of offices appeared necessary, and this was carried into effect by first annulling all the existing Commissions and then appointing one member to the head of each of the nine administrative departments, which nine heads should together form the Executive. Fresh Commissions would be appointed to assist them in their labours.

The nine members chosen by the Commune for chiefs of departments were as follow:—

Cluseret . .	*War.*
Rigault . .	*Police.*
Protot . .	*Justice.*
Jourde . .	*Finance.*
Grousset . .	*Foreign Affairs.*
Vaillant . .	*Education.*
Andrieu . .	*Public Works.*
Viard . .	*Food.*
Frankel . .	*Labour and Exchange.*

The fact that Cluseret was maintained in the all-important office of War, did not imply that the discontent of which he was the object had suddenly ceased to exist. The difficulty was to provide a successor of better worth. Rossel, Cluseret's chief of staff, appeared the fittest in point of ability, but he was in disfavour with the Comité Central, and the federates generally, by reason of the severity of the judgments which he gave in the recently established military court. Disobedience, thefts, drunkenness, were faults in soldiers that Rossel could not tolerate, and they were faults which, in the Communist army, were of exceedingly frequent occurrence. After Rossel there was Dombrowski, able and courageous—but he was a foreigner, and notwithstanding the effusive declarations of some of the Parisian leaders, the rank and file of the National Guards looked with suspicion upon any but Frenchmen occupying their chief positions of command. That Dombrowski had retained for even

a fortnight the high office in which he succeeded Bergeret, was an eloquent testimony to his courage and skill, which qualities alone had reduced the opposition that the appointment called forth. Both Dombrowski and Rossel had become antagonistic to Cluseret, partly from ambitious designs and partly by reason of the latter's want of energy. Cluseret remained strictly on the defensive, whereas the sole chance of improving the Communist position lay in prosecuting offensive tactics against the Versailles army whilst the latter was more or less immature.

The jealousies and ill-feeling existing between the three military chiefs were but a sample of other discordances manifested amongst the Communist leaders. Immediately after the new Executive Commission had been appointed, members began to wonder whether they had done wisely in placing almost unrestrained power in its hands. Its duties and functions were as undefined as had been those of the Commissions it had superseded, and distrust, uncertainty, and confusion prevailed in regard to it. These feelings were openly exhibited the next day (April 21st) in the Communal sitting, and as a result the fresh Commissions that were appointed were intended not only to help in working the departments, but also to control the Executive. Five members formed each Commission, and forty-five members were thus appointed to control the executive nine. It is of interest only to name the five forming the Commission of Control for War; viz., Delescluze, Tridon, Avrial, Ranvier, Arnold. Here again was the same absence of delimitation of functions —the Committees of Control tacitly understood that they were not appointed to supersede the Executive, yet they were in complete ignorance as to how far their supervision was to extend.

At the last-named sitting of the Commune, a letter was read from Félix Pyat in which he gave his resignation of membership, on the ground that he disapproved of the course which the Commune had adopted in validating the recent elections by a simple majority of voters. This action brought upon Pyat the wrath of Vermorel, who, the next day, engaged in a newspaper war with him, taunted him with his speedily got deliverance from prison after the 31st October affair, and declared that he was two-faced—advocating in the secrecy of the Commune the most violent and intolerant measures, which in the publicity of

his journal he denounced. As an instance: the recent suppression of journals, due to Rigault's initiative, was energetically approved of by Pyat in the Commune, yet in *Le Vengeur* of April 21st he condemned the act.

This matter led to a stormy incident in the Commune on April 22nd, Vermorel and Pyat engaging in a wordy conflict, the former demanding the latter's arrest, whilst another member suggested that Pyat should be accused and shot. It was clear that Pyat's resignation was again only an endeavour to escape responsibility for his participation in the Commune. Not so minded was Delescluze, who exclaimed, "Think you, then, that every one approves that which is done here? Ah well, there are members who, in spite of all, have remained and will remain unto the end, and, if we triumph not, they will not be the last to seek death, either at the ramparts or elsewhere." The Commune refused to accept Pyat's resignation, and that individual, beginning to see that he was running from a far danger to a near one, subsequently withdrew it, under the pretext that pressure from his electors induced him to.[1] The discussion in reference to Pyat had been lengthy enough to excite the ire of Blanchet, who demanded less talk and more action. What about the Vendôme Column? he asked. Demolition was decreed some days ago, yet nothing has been done.[2]

Protot, the head of Justice, brought in at this sitting a decree relative to the juries of accusation before whom the hostages were to be tried. The jurors were to be drawn from the National Guards, and the office of accuser was to be filled by a Public Prosecutor and four substitutes, all of whom would have to be appointed. Then Bergeret's name was mentioned, and it was thought that the imprisoned general should be set at liberty. It was so decided: Bergeret was sent for and presently appeared once more in the Commune, acting a professedly magnanimous part by declaring that he entertained no vindictive feeling to any of his colleagues by reason of his arrest.[3]

Suspicion in the Commune was an increasing quantity. Rigault was an object of it, not unmingled with trepidation—

[1] *Journal Officiel*, April 23rd. [2] *Ibid.* [3] *Ibid.*

he was himself so fearless and so powerful. The numerous arrests he had made perturbed the minds of his colleagues, not on account of the hapless prisoners, but because of their imperious gaoler. Rigault's power was becoming too sweeping ; it needed a curb. The Commission of Control appointed to his Department included three men of views as extreme as himself —Cournet, Ferré, Trinquet—and was therefore not a control at all in the sense of modifying his action. Something, however, must be done to check his high-handed energy, and an opportunity was seized, when Rigault was absent from the Commune, April 23rd, to do it. Many of the prisoners were kept in secret confinement, and it was impossible to interview them without Rigault's permission—a favour difficult to obtain. The Commune therefore unanimously declared that each member should have the power to visit and interview prisoners. A unanimous declaration such as this, it thought, must be respected even by Rigault. The day following, Rigault straightway demanded that the Commune should rescind its decision. "Secret confinement is immoral," protested Arthur Arnould. "War also," replied Rigault, "and yet we fight." However, the Commune maintained its decision, but this time by a vote which was nearly equal—a proof of the influence which Rigault's personality bore.[1] The head of the police would not, however, suffer himself to be thus gainsayed, and he immediately resigned his office. Cournet was appointed in his place, and, as an instant solatium, Rigault was deputed to fill Cournet's place on the Commission of Control. It was a jugglery of offices which left Rigault's influence unimpaired. The prisoners benefited little by the change. It was still very difficult for any of their friends to see them—even for those who knew members of the Commune, and who lacked neither perseverance, courage, nor tact in the pursuit of their quest. Rigault's overshadowing presence was still at the Prefecture—he was still a power to be reckoned with, and neither Cournet, his successor, nor Protot, the head of Justice, nor any of the members of the Commune cared to place themselves too violently in opposition to his wishes. The release of one notable prisoner, however, followed upon these events.

[1] Forni, pp. 48, 49.

This individual was Mademoiselle Darboy, the Archbishop's sister, and her freedom was directly due to the intervention in her behalf of Cluseret and Beslay. Rigault, two days after his resignation of the office of Delegate to the Police department, was appointed by the Commune to fill the new position of Public Prosecutor, as required by Protot, and the four substitutes for that official, subsequently appointed, were men of Rigault's selection; their names were Ferré (member of the Commune), Dacosta, Martainville, and Huguenot. It is clear from these facts that Rigault was still held in high repute by his colleagues.

Meanwhile, the Versailles army had been increased by two army corps. Its batteries in the south were now ready, and on April 25th they commenced firing on the forts Issy and Vanves. These forts responded vigorously to the attack, and were assisted by the guns from the fortifications; they also fired upon the fort Mont Valérien, which naturally replied thereto, otherwise this day it would have remained silent. A truce had been arranged for Neuilly and neighbourhood by the benevolent exertions of the Conciliation leagues—the only tangible result these bodies had yet attained—in order that the unfortunate denizens of Neuilly might quit the cellars of their ruined houses, where, since April 2nd, they had been cooped up, afraid to venture out, often even for food—so continued had been the firing from the combatants. Thus this April 25th, whilst it witnessed the beginning of the cannon's roar in the south, brought also a temporary cessation of it in the west. The unhappy, frightened, and hungered sufferers of Neuilly hurried from their abodes—which were no longer homes—and children, who had endured the three weeks' firing, were almost bereft of their reason by the ordeal. Pitiful indeed were the young girls who emerged that bright, sunny day from the Home for young Invalids at Neuilly—terrified beyond measure, ill, scrofulous, hungered, and cold, through no fault either of theirs or their attendants. The broad avenue of Neuilly was crowded with Parisians eager to extend their daily walk when they safely might. Among them was a girl—a prostitute, yet with a woman's heart—whose eyes filled with tears as she saw the abject children; hastily undoing her mantle, she threw it to-

wards them, with a cry, "For the little ones!"[1] A strange contrast was presented on that road. Scores of thousands of Parisians enjoying an unwonted liberty, full of the pleasure and vivacity which are their characteristics, and here and there a family or a group of homeless, miserable, anxious people, surrounded by whatever boxes and baggage they could take away, walking, or upon every conceivable form of conveyance riding, to gain the protection of the Paris walls. The truce was for eight hours only, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. At the expiration of the time, hostilities were at once recommenced by the Versaillais.

In the western district the recent movements of the Government troops had been very slight, and no advance made for some days. In the south, however, the village of Moulineaux, close to Fort Issy, was captured by the Versaillais on April 26th; they instantly set to work to fortify it so as to protect and further their advance. The cannonading of Fort Issy went on incessantly. Several of its guns were already silenced, and Mégy, the governor of the fort, felt himself in a position of some danger.

Eudes was general commander of the forts. He had fixed his quarters originally in Fort Issy, then in Fort Montrouge; finally he had departed altogether from the forts and was located in the Palais de la Légion d'Honneur, in the centre of Paris on the south bank of the Seine. At that palace he and the woman who passed as his wife began to live under gay surroundings, and, for Communists, with much brilliance, dispensing hospitality and arranging balls and fêtes with great *éclat* and style. There, unperturbed by the roar of cannons and the vicinity of death, life was become more pleasant to him than it had ever been.

The increasing strength and approach of the Versaillais began to alarm some of the Communist leaders, and, in default of military action, measures of vexatious retaliation were adopted. Up to the present the decree for the demolition of the Vendôme column had almost been forgotten. Gustave Courbet revived the question at the Communal meeting of the 27th April, and demanded that the decree should be executed. Andrieu and

[1] Du Camp, t. ii. pp. 315–317.

Grousset, both of the Executive, said that the work of demolition was already contracted for, and would be carried out at the earliest possible moment. At the same sitting a decree was passed authorizing the destruction of the Chapel Bréa—an edifice erected to the memory of General Bréa, who was assassinated in 1848 by a revolutionist of that epoch.

Whilst the Commune was thus engaged, the Freemasons of Paris were contemplating formally ranging themselves on its side. By consent of the Commune, a procession of some thousands of the fraternity departed from the Hôtel de Ville on April 29th to plant the standards of their order upon the ramparts, and then to proceed to negotiate with M. Thiers for a peaceful settlement. Ranvier and Beslay, Communist brethren, accompanied the procession to the ramparts. When the negotiators displayed a white flag, the firing from the enemy ceased; they planted their standards upon the ramparts near the Porte Maillot, and went forward to negotiate—saw M. Thiers, and made their proposals, which, like all others that had hitherto been made, were based either upon a recognition or an absolution of the Commune. Thiers, however, would assent only to a complete and unconditional submission. The Masonic deputation returned to Paris, when, according to the terms of their prior arrangement, they were bound to side with and fight for the Commune; there is, however, no reason to believe that the accession to the Communist ranks from this quarter was very great or of much practical account. The moral value of their action was, however, not to be despised, as showing that the Commune, notwithstanding the very questionable deeds which it had sanctioned and performed, was still looked upon by an intelligent portion of the Parisian people with trustfulness and expectancy of benefit. Around the word "Commune" were undoubtedly grouped, to many French minds, ideal hopes of all that man would like—liberty, competence, happiness; unfortunately, it was not comprehended that these blessings in their theoretical fulness or in any near approach thereto, are absolutely unattainable. Some people at Lyons at that moment, encouraged and incited by the Paris Commune, were meditating following the example of the capital and forcibly establishing a Commune—they will fail, not without bloodshed. Let them be

felicitated on failing! The poor caged birds, which are so free to fly all over their little prisons, long to escape therefrom. They know not, that to the most of them, escape would but mean suffering, and perchance death! Oh that humanity would be content with a circumscribed freedom, which, if irksome, is at least safe!

The cessation of firing in the west of Paris during the journey of the Freemasons to and from Versailles was not understood by Mégy, the commander of Fort Issy, to whom no communication of the Masonic project had been made. He thought a truce had either been arranged or was about to be, and, upon these slight grounds, he relaxed his vigilance. The Versailles troops were not slow to take advantage of this; they advanced quietly to the trenches and grounds in front of the fort, and, using only their bayonets, they seized the cemetery of Issy, carried several formidable barricades and trenches, and forced back the federates, upon whom they inflicted great loss.[1] Mégy, seeing the Versaillais in such unexpected proximity to the fort, took fright and precipitately left it.[2] It was night, and the darkness covered his departure, so that his men were not aware of it. The next morning (April 30th) the garrison, unable to find their commander and perceiving the desperate position in which the fort was placed, lost courage, and they also, to the number of 300 men, left the fort. For four hours it remained abandoned,[3] though the Versaillais were unaware of the fact. Cluseret, when he learnt of this, immediately took steps to re-man the fort, a task which was satisfactorily accomplished, and Eudes, with other members of the Commune, repaired there, and tried to instil confidence into the disheartened soldiers.

Great indignation was expressed in Paris when it was known that the fort had so narrowly escaped being lost to them. "Treason" and "traitors" were the words that rose naturally to the lips of the National Guards, and deputations from numerous battalions appeared at the Hôtel de Ville to demand explanations and punishment to the guilty ones. Cluseret's direct responsibility in the affair was *nil*, for the Executive Committee had not informed him of the projected Masonic manifestation,

[1] Macmahon, p. 6. [2] Lefrançais, p. 284.
[3] *La Vérité*, p. 358.

and he could not transmit to Mégy information which he did not possess. Nevertheless, because he was generally unequal to the post he occupied and had not obtained favour with the Comité Central, the occasion was seized to divest him of the position and to imprison him; whilst Mégy, who was directly and severely culpable for abandoning the fort, was simply withdrawn from his command.[1]

A new Delegate of War was at once appointed in the person of Rossel, between whom and Cluseret there had recently been so much friction that the former had nominally resigned his office of Chief of Staff. One of his first duties as successor to Cluseret was to reply to a summons which had been sent by the Versaillais to Fort Issy to surrender, which, if agreed to within a quarter of an hour, all lives and liberty would be granted; if not, the entire garrison would be shot. The Versailles officer who signed this peremptory notice chanced to be an old friend of Rossel's; the fact is frankly implied in the latter's reply: "My dear Comrade,—The next time you send us such an insolent summons as your letter of yesterday, I shall shoot your messenger, conformably to the usages of war.—Your devoted comrade, ROSSEL." Fort Issy, partly ruined though it was, still withstood the Versaillais efforts to capture it.

Cluseret had lacked energy—Rossel abounded in it. The Commission of Barricades, which under Cluseret's auspices had done little, received an instant impulse under Rossel's. He ordered Napoleon Gaillard, a little, eccentric and oldish man, to construct barricades by which to form a second line of defence within the fortifications. Gaillard promptly set about the work —formed a battalion of 800 barricaders, and raised first one and then another of these defensive structures in a scientific manner. This little man was in immense love with himself at the authoritative position thus given him, and for the time being barricades ran through all his moments: eating, he formed models of them with his food; drinking and walking, he thought of their construction; sleeping, he dreamt of them—never a man was so absorbed in his work as he.[2]

Rossel was as much alive as Cluseret to the defective state of

[1] Lefrançais, pp. 284, 285. [2] Du Camp, t. ii. pp. 320–323.

the Communal army, and, now that he was at the head of it, he determined to introduce the many reforms and reorganizations which were necessary. But at the outset he was handicapped by an impending change of Executive, which rendered it uncertain whether he would be maintained in his post.

The Executive, which had been appointed on April 20th, had answered expectations even less than its predecessor. With the exception of Rigault, its members were weak, vacillating, and reluctant to undertake the responsibility of extreme measures. The Commissions of Control complicated and hampered the administration. Power, which on April 20th had been concentrated in nine heads, had, the next day, been diffused through fifty-four, without rule or regulation to guide them or to preserve harmony. No wonder that such a system of government should, in less than ten days, have been productive of disputes, bickerings, overlapping of functions, and contradictory commands, the general result of all being that nothing tangible was accomplished. There was already no question as to its unworkableness—the sole, but important, consideration was what to erect in its stead. The dissatisfaction which existed took shape in the Communal sitting of April 29th, when Jules Miot formulated a proposition for establishing a Committee of Public Safety, which should consist of five members, and to which should be given full powers. A stormy discussion upon this question lasted over three sittings, and a very important and strenuous opposition to the proposal was manifested by the more moderate members of the Commune, in whose opinion the Revolution of 1793 was unsuitable for reproduction in 1871, and who thought that any attempt to follow its example in regard to the Committee of Public Safety would be fraught with the gravest results. The Commune stood at the parting of the ways: until now a semblance of unity had covered its corporate actions — upon the issue of this question would depend whether or not that semblance was to be dispersed and an open rupture shown to the world. The decision was taken on May 1st in an assembly of sixty-eight members, and the result was that forty-four voted for, and twenty-four against the proposed Committee of Public Safety.

The division list is as follows:—*For:* Amouroux, Ant. Arnaud, Allix, Bergeret, Billioray, Blanchet, Brunel, Champy, Chardon, E. Clément, Cournet, Demay, Dereure, Cl. Dupont, Durand, Ferré, Frankel, Fortuné, Gambon, C. Gérardin, Géresme, Grousset, Johannard, Ledroit, Lonclas, Martelet, Meillet, Miot, Oudet, Parisel, Pillot, Pottier, Philippe, Pyat, Ranvier, Régère, Rigault, Sicard, Trinquet, Urbain, Vaillant, Vesinier, Viard, Verdure—44. *Against:* Andrieu, Art. Arnould, Avrial, Babick, Beslay, Clémence, J. B. Clément, V. Clément, Courbet, E. Gérardin, Jourde, Langevin, Lefrançais, Longuet, Malon, Ostyn, Pindy, Rastoul, Serailler, Tridon, Theisz, Vallès, Varlin, Vermorel—24.[1]

The forty-four in favour of Miot's proposal were formed of thirteen Comité Central members, seven Internationalists, eight Journalists, and sixteen Club politicians; the twenty-four against comprised one Comité Central member, fifteen Internationalists, six Journalists, one Club politician, and Courbet, the artist. The chief deductions from these figures are that the members of the Comité Central and the speakers at Club and Public Meetings were, corporately, of a revolutionary bent, whilst the Internationalists adhered as a body to their original character of social, but not ultra-revolutionary, reformers. The Journalists, as a class, were more extreme than the above figures show, for at least two of them, whose names do not appear in the above list of voters, were in favour of Miot's proposal; these were Delescluze and Protot.

A Committee of Public Safety being thus decided upon, the Commune next proceeded to elect the five members who should form it. This operation devolved solely upon the majority, for the minority refused to take any part in it. The elected five

[1] These figures and names do not agree with the account published in the *Journal Officiel*, where the votes were given as being forty-five for and twenty-three against the Committee of Public Safety. The names given, however, *for* counted only to forty-two instead of forty-five. Even Du Camp, very complete and explicit though he usually is, has permitted an element of doubt to arise in regard to his own figures by the omission, doubtless accidental, of Oudet's name from the full list of members of the Commune, given at the end of the fourth volume. By including Oudet, the figures given in the text are arrived at from Du Camp's account, and make up the total of sixty-eight without hiatus.

were Antoine Arnaud, Léo Meillet, Gabriel Ranvier, Félix Pyat, and Charles Gérardin. The last-named was a friend of Rossel's; through him Rossel had been introduced to the 17th arrondissement.

This new Executive did not do away with the old nine, who were left at the heads of their respective departments to carry on the work of administration. It superseded the controlling functions of the Commissions appointed on the 21st April, but left them their privileges of assisting in the departmental work; it, being charged with full powers, was invested with the duty of directing the general policy of the Commune, more especially in regard to the war.

In this connection it immediately confirmed Rossel in the post to which the former Executive had appointed him, and therefore Rossel's path seemed clear for carrying out the much-needed military reforms. There were, however, other obstacles in his way. A self-elected Committee of Artillery, acting in concert with the Comité Central, was at the head of that important branch of the fighting power; it talked much and did little. The artillery organization was the most defective in the whole army; guns there were in plenty—but insufficient men, few horses, and divided commands, rendered them of scant utility. When Rossel notified his wishes to this Committee, requesting it to remedy defects, and showing it what ought to be done to make the artillery effective, the only response he obtained was deliberation without action. From the Commune itself he received no better aid. Refractory Guards were numerous and increasing, and it was imperative to take severe measures to stop this leakage of power; but his proposals to the Commune met again with deliberation only. Drunkenness and open consorting with prostitutes was a prevalent fault. Rossel's order of punishment to such offenders was disobeyed, because the officers of the army were themselves delinquents.[1] The Committee of Public Safety had no clear perception of the necessities of the moment, and Rossel was left to surmount his difficulties alone. His capacities were ignored; his severity augmented the dislike with which he was viewed, and the

[1] Du Camp, t. ii. p. 90.

National Guards consequently took orders from their own elected Committees and not from the delegate of War.

Whilst matters were in so discordant and feverish a condition at the Office of War, it is pleasant to record an instance of the head of a department receiving unanimous commendation and support at the hands of his colleagues. The recipient of this flattering esteem was Jourde, Financial Delegate. In the recent proposition for a Committee of Public Safety, Jourde, with his friends Varlin and Beslay, had voted against its establishment, and he carried his vote to a logical issue by resigning his office when the Committee had been appointed. At that moment he had already prepared a statement of the Communal finances, which the next day (May 2nd) he submitted to the Commune. It was a surprise to that body to find in one of its departments something like order and business capacity. Jourde's account of expenditure and income was as clear and precise, in point of figures, as a balance-sheet ought to be. So satisfactory was it considered, that the Commune would not hear of his resignation, and, before the eulogiums poured upon him, his determination, never very strong, yielded, and he accepted from the Committee whose existence he had endeavoured to prevent his re-appointment as Delegate to the Finances. The account presented by Jourde covered the period March 20th to April 30th, and it stated that, of the Communal income, about 6 million francs had been discovered in the Government offices, $7\frac{3}{4}$ millions had been obtained from the Bank of France, and over 12 millions had come from various sources, such as customs, market dues, tobacco factory, posts and telegraphs, etc. The amount received under the head of "perquisitions" was slight—less than 9,000 francs; but the "perquisitions" really included many other amounts which were put down under different names. The expenditure was chiefly of a military character, 22 million francs going to the War Department out of the total of 25 millions; Justice, truly a dormant department, took only 5,500 francs; whilst the Police, a very active one, appeared for 235,000 francs. The balance of cash in hand on April 30th was nearly a million francs; on May 2nd this balance had increased to over two millions—from what particular source Jourde said not. The Communal finances were thought to be very flourishing;

Jourde's auditors were not troubled with ethical or practical considerations of the immorality of perquisitions, compulsory advances, or the appropriation of monies that were left behind by the Government when it hastily packed itself off to Versailles. Jourde, an accurate book-keeper and honest himself, was the creature of circumstances; powerless, even had he wished, to say to the Commune, "This is not thine!"

Until recently, Jourde had been greatly assisted in the less clerical portion of his labours by Varlin, who also was a man of personal probity, and of strong and, in the main, honourable convictions. These men, though having millions of francs through their hands, lived unostentatiously and meagrely; unlike some of the Communists, such as Eudes and Bergeret, who delighted in swagger, gaudy uniforms, and numerous *entourage*, and who hesitated not to pilfer the public establishments they were in and to seize for their private use whatever they could. Another marked contrast to the latter set of people, of a military nature, was presented by Cluseret and Rossel, both of whom always appeared in plain, ordinary attire.[1] "It is to blind the Versaillais to their identity," said some; it is to show their contempt for the communal Bombastes, knew others. At least one other Communal chief worked with as much success in his department as Jourde. This was Theisz, whose administration of the disorganized postal service drew forth commendation from all sides. The postal radius was limited to the capital and the suburbs in federate possession, and was thus extremely restricted; it, however, required a man of energy and of intelligence to render even this small area useful in a postal sense, and Theisz, considering his previous lack of special knowledge of this work, accomplished great things.

Finances, Posts: important establishments in ordinary times, but of subsidiary interest when the grim giant of War erects his head. The Commune might be said to have only one department—War; for, to establish its existence by force of arms being imperative, almost everything it did bore upon this cardinal exigency. Its human material, notwithstanding defections and deaths, totalled up still to a huge number. According to a

[1] Du Camp, t. ii. p. 329.

report submitted on May 3rd to the War Office, the fighting force amounted to 190,425 foot and 449 cavalry.[1] The paper representation of this formidable army was doubtless greater than the reality, the nominal strength of battalions being probably given instead of their actual. Versailles, which would be sure to receive an account of these figures, was to be struck with awe; federate Paris, still relying upon Communal promises and prognostications of victory, was to be encouraged and reassured. Nevertheless, there was still a force which, had it been thoroughly organized and disciplined, led by capable officers, and wielded by an intelligent head, might ere then have scattered the Versaillais in all directions. All the moral essentials of success, however, were wanting to it. The first nominal chief, Eudes, was totally deficient in capacity; Cluseret was in all points his superior, yet he lacked the energy and decision that the hour demanded; now Rossel, superior to Cluseret, possessing many distinguishing faculties, alive to the need for eradicating that indiscipline which threatened to be fatal to the Communist cause, and putting forth all his endeavours towards the attainment of this object, has before him a task which only a master-mind can accomplish. Will Rossel prove himself such?

On the night of the 2nd May another plot had been afoot, by which the Versaillais had hoped to gain entrance into Paris. M. Thiers believed so strongly that the eventful time had arrived, that he slept or sojourned all the night at Sèvres, in anticipation of the Dauphin gate being opened.[2] But the Communal spies had been alert, and had noticed a suggestive movement of Versailles troops towards the fortifications; in consequence of their intimation that some attack was impending, strict orders had been transmitted to the various guards at the exits that the drawbridges were not to be lowered on any account, nor any person permitted to go out. These orders did not meet with absolute obedience—there were none that did—but sufficient regard was paid to them to prevent the plotters inside the fortifications from carrying out their design, and their failure rendered the projected entrance abortive.[3]

[1] Du Camp, t. iii. p. 254. [2] *Guerre des Communeux de Paris*, p. 167.
[3] Dalsème, pp. 205–209.

The Versaillais were baulked; perchance because of being so, Thiers indulged the next day in a sarcasm at once malicious and cruel, utterly wanting in dignity and feeling. In the early morning of May 4th, Versailles troops to the number of 1,200 bore upon the Communist redoubt of Moulin Saquet at the south-east end of the forts, surprised the federates, who were sleeping, killed 250 of them almost in cold blood, and took 300 officers and men prisoners.[1] Thiers was elated. "Such is the victory," he wrote, "that the Commune can celebrate to-morrow in its bulletins."[2] A victory of questionable glory; let it rather be termed a butchery as heartless as any that a civilized people has ever perpetrated.

The surprise entrance to the redoubt had been facilitated by the indiscretion of a federate officer named Gallien, who had carelessly divulged the watchword in a public café in the neighbouring village of Vitry.[3] A Polish officer, Wrobleski, who was general commander of the federates in the South, was also severely blamed by Rossel, for having on the preceding day quitted his post without orders. "By orders!" returned the incriminated officer; "Félix Pyat ordered me to Fort Issy." Pyat denied the assertion again and again, but the written order was produced and shown him, and denial was no longer possible.[4] Such was the confidence and the collaboration which Rossel experienced at the hands of this crafty and unprincipled member of the Committee of Public Safety. Wrobleski was exonerated, and maintained in his command. Fort Issy, to which Pyat had sent him, was receiving the brunt of the Versailles attack; the Government troops surrounded the fort with impunity, and the garrison within it were again beginning to feel alarm. Reinforcements were not sent them; the Comité Central neglected even to inform Rossel of how matters stood, and his position was such that he was compelled to rely upon the Comité Central both for information and for material. Hitherto, his requests for men had scarcely received attention, yet he relaxed not his sternness nor his disciplinary measures. Some federates who had turned refractory he ordered to be

[1] Macmahon, p. 7.
[2] Despatch by Thiers, quoted in *La Vérité*, p. 364.
[3] *La Vérité*, p. 363. Lefrançais, p. 287.
[4] Lefrançais, p. 293.

shot—the order was disobeyed because it devolved upon the Comité Central to carry it out; nevertheless, the fact that such a drastic and unfraternal order had been given, added to the ill-will with which Rossel was viewed.

The Committee of Public Safety, as the chief executive authority, should have supported Rossel against the Comité Central, but it failed to do so; it was misnamed, for it was considering not the public safety, but its own. The responsibility of directing the war unnerved it; between the pretensions of the Comité Central and the rights of the Commune, as represented by Rossel, it knew not what to do, wishing to reconcile what was irreconcilable, and to have a peaceful existence in the midst of war. A way of escape from its dilemma was formed as the result of its own weakness. On May 5th "the Comité Central came almost imperiously to offer its assistance to the administration of war"[1]—not that the present head of that department was in the least unable to transact his business, but that the Comité, fortified as it was by the adherence of the entire federate army, and encouraged by the insipidity of the Committee of Public Safety, felt that an opportunity had presented itself, whereby it might more openly assume the reins of power and reduce Rossel's influence whilst increasing its own. The Committee of Public Safety accepted the offer, and formally handed over to the Comité Central the military administration, reserving to Rossel the direction of military operations. The guiding hand in this action of the Comité Central was Edouard Moreau.[2]

Rossel was still Delegate of War, and the Committee of Public Safety still existed; but the authority of the one was more than ever nominal, and the power of the other had been largely relegated.

The same day that this occurred, Blanchet, the member of the Commune, was arrested at Rigault's instigation, because it had transpired that his name was assumed, his real one being Pourille, and that formerly he had been a Capucin monk, also an agent of police at Lyons, and had been condemned to a week's imprisonment for fraudulent bankruptcy in 1868.[3] Blanchet—

[1] Letter of Rossel, dated May 9th. [2] Du Camp, t. iv. p. 97.
[3] Forni, pp. 92, 93. Blanchet's pamphlet, pp. 22, 31.

or Pourille—was consigned to Mazas prison, the governor of which, recently appointed by Rigault, was one Garreau, a man of hard and unfeeling nature.[1]

On May 5th there were also arrested and sent to the prison St. Lazare, ninety-one sisters of the religious community of the Sacred Heart;[2] seven additional newspapers were suppressed,[3] and Bayeux-Dumesnil, who had been the original president of the Comité Central, but who had remained of moderate tendencies whilst it had rapidly advanced on revolutionary lines, was revoked from the direction of the mairie of the 9th arrondissement, which he had wisely administered since April 5th.[4] The Commune at this period also began to melt the gold and silver plate which it had derived from various sources—churches, the public ministries, and the Hôtel des Invalides; it was about to show that it was really an independent State, and would have its own coinage. For the same purpose ingots of silver were obtained from the long-suffering but prudent Bank of France, which institution still continued to supply money wherewith to pay the federates.[5] From these facts it is evident that the Commune abated not one jot of its revolutionary ardour, and was determined to uphold its claims to recognition. On May 6th a further curtailment of liberty took place by the prohibition of military articles in the press;[6] and another evidence of intolerance was shown by a decree being issued for the demolition of the Expiatory Chapel in Rue d'Anjou.

Contemporaneously with these things and with the arrests of priests, which still occurred from time to time, the Commune endeavoured to justify the expectations of those who looked to it to realize all the blessings of the democratic ideal. It established a finishing school for boys, modified the regulations of the public libraries and museums, and reformed the Opera, the Fine Arts, and the Bar. It dealt with many other subjects, and touched all with the superficial hand of ignorance. It requisitioned vacant apartments for the benefit of sufferers by the war,

[1] Du Camp, t. i. p. 234. [2] *Ibid.*, t. i. p. 143.

[3] *Le Petit Moniteur*, *Le Petit Journal*, *Le Bon Sens*, *La Petite Presse*, *La France*, *Le Temps*, *Le Petit National*.

[4] Du Camp, t. iv. p. 196. [5] *Ibid.*, t. iii. p. 217; t. iv. p. 121.

[6] *Ibid.*, t. iv. p. 170.

and it ordered a search to be made in the Archives for documents incriminatory of the members of the Government of the National Defence. It is pitiful to have to record such a prying and contemptible measure as the last-named; but, alas, the preceding Governments of France had shown in many instances examples that were equally unworthy of the occupants of such high positions.

It is beyond dispute that the members of the Commune, as a whole, were men of narrow intelligences, sincere it might be—though even this is of doubtful acceptance in regard to several individuals—but totally unfitted to rule over so huge a population as two million souls. The inferior Communal authorities were like unto their superiors; thus there was continually manifested a vein of puerility and prejudice, exemplified by selfish indulgence, confusion of commands, and intolerant oppression. High-sounding principles were adopted with bombastic rapture, but advocacy took the place of practice. Rossel in particular found this to be the case. His wrath at the Comité Central's want of action and undue deliberation was great and justified. "They started a project when men were necessary, and declared principles when acts were required."[1] On May 8th these tactics were prolonged to a point at which Rossel seethed with indignation. He had an execution company waiting for them, and was strongly tempted to take the law into his own hands and make short work of these word jugglers. It was the decisive moment of his life.

He was the ablest man in the Communal service at this juncture, but was just one whit too scrupulous for the time. Even as De Broglie, eighty years before, had had his whiff of grape shot ready, but had hesitated to use it, so Rossel hesitated to take alone the initiative of a drastic step. But energy and severity are wanted—only *they* can reduce order from this chaos of indiscipline. Instead of shooting the windy deliberators, Rossel brought himself to their own level by permitting his indignation to expand itself in words. His annoyance was extreme, and apparently brought the Comité Central to their senses. "Bring me," he said, "twelve thousand organized men

[1] Rossel's letter of May 9th.

by to-morrow morning at half-past eleven, and I will proceed to the front and give battle to the enemy."[1] You do nothing but talk, and therefore the Versaillais gain upon us; let us have action and they will lose. The chiefs to whom Rossel spoke promised to supply the 12,000 men as requested.

In the meeting of the Commune that day, news of the fighting was asked for—nothing had been heard for three days. Eudes suggested sending to the Committee of Public Safety for information. Régère had already been there—it, like them, was without news. Jourde had a trouble to communicate; he had received orders from a body styled the "Republican Federation of the National Guard," which he averred he knew not. This body had superseded Rossel, seized what cash there was at the War Office, and demanded more cash. Jourde wished to know whether the Commune or the Comité Central was in power! Avrial, appointed Director of Artillery some days ago by Rossel, was similarly circumstanced. He naturally imagined himself to be under Rossel's orders, but found day after day a Committee of Artillery which, he also averred, he knew not, and which gave him instructions and required his obedience. Ch. Gérardin explained what the Committee of Public Safety had done in regard to delegating to the Comité Central the duty of carrying on the military administration. Further complaints were made by Varlin, Avrial, and others. The Comité Central was in the ascendant, they said, and assumed all the externals of unassailable authority; its members wore a regalia similar to that of the members of the Commune; they mounted horse, gave orders, and received plaudits of "Vive la Commune!" which surely should have been reserved for the genuine representatives of the people. The complainants were, however, in a minority; the majority of the Commune, actuated by a confused blend of motives, none of which were creditable, accepted the explanation which Gérardin had tendered, and closed the discussion by ratifying the arrangement made by the Committee of Public Safety.[2]

One result of the Comité Central's military incapacity soon became evident. Fort Issy, which should have been strongly

[1] Rossel's letter.

[2] *Journal Officiel*, May 9th and 10th.

reinforced in order to withstand the Versaillais attack, had been neglected, and the enemy had consequently almost surrounded it. Its garrison again took fear, and deliberated whether or not to evacuate the fort. The commander sent by Rossel in place of Mégy, was so emphatically against taking such a course, that he was expelled from the fort by the garrison, who themselves abandoned it during the night of May 8/9th. In the morning the fort was occupied by the Versaillais, and the tricoloured flag of the Republic hoisted upon it.

Rossel knew not of this when at half-past eleven he awaited the arrival of the 12,000 men promised by the Comité Central. They were not to be seen. At half-past twelve he learnt of the loss of Fort Issy; still the 12,000 men were not to hand. By one o'clock about 7,000 men, badly equipped, turned up —not at all the same thing as what was promised. Rossel's patience was exhausted; his chafed and unanswered spirit consumed and angered him; he would endure no more. He caused to be posted up throughout Paris the following laconic announcement: "The tricolour flag floats over the Fort Issy, abandoned last night by the garrison"—it was the first intimation that the Commune or the Committee of Public Safety received of the fact [1]—and he wrote a letter to the Commune, in which he set forth the inaction, the incapacity, and the faithlessness of the Comité Central, as well as the conflict of authority between it and the Commune; concluding by demanding for himself a cell at Mazas—he was well aware that imprisonment was the only reward he would then receive. This letter he sent immediately to two newspapers which had been friendly disposed towards him, and in them it appeared in a very short time, and became public knowledge even before the Commune had received the original.[2]

These impetuous and irritating actions brought upon Rossel the indignation of a large section of the Commune, a feeling which Pyat, who was chairman at that day's sitting, ever happy in stirring up hatreds and feuds, did all he could to augment. Rossel's arrest was ordered by all the members present except three—Malon, Charles Gérardin, and Avrial—and he was con-

[1] Lefrançais, p. 291. [2] *Ibid.*

fided for safe custody to the Military Commission, which at this period included Charles Gérardin and Avrial in its number. Rossel's complaint against the Comité Central was endorsed with much energy by Delescluze, whose influence in the Commune was greater than that of any other individual, and by Jourde, whose protest against its interference he supported by resigning for the second time his office. The Committee of Public Safety, whose weakness had produced the present difficulty, was condemned, its resignation demanded and obtained. Before replacing that Committee, the Commune elected a successor to Rossel, being actuated to adopt this unexpected course of procedure by Pyat, who had ulterior aims in view.

Rossel, in his contentions with the Comité Central, had laboured under the disadvantage of not being a member of the Commune. His successor should be a man clothed with the authority of a representative of the people, and able to hold his position against the encroachments of the Comité Central. Such was Delescluze, their ablest and nearly their oldest member. Delescluze was chosen Delegate of War, and then Jourde was re-elected to his post of Finances. The minority members of the Commune, who had refused to vote for the Committee of Public Safety on May 1st, remarked the fact of these appointments being made prior to the election of a new Committee of Public Safety. It was an evident renunciation, they thought, of giving full powers to that Committee. This was the impression Pyat had sought to disseminate in order to secure the full voting strength of the Commune in the formation of the new Committee. His ruse succeeded, and the minority on this occasion decided to take part in the elections for the Committee of Public Safety.[1] Its influence upon the candidates elected was *nil*, for the majority took itself apart to choose its nominees,[2] and these were all elected when the voting of the combined sections was taken, whilst the minority, by participating therein, had formally sanctioned the principle which only eight days before it had repudiated. The names of the new Committee of Public Safety were Antoine Arnaud, Eudes, Delescluze, Gambon, and Ranvier. Eudes immediately

[1] Lefrançais, pp. 293, 294.

[2] *La Vérité*, p. 370.

announced that he and his colleagues would act upon the devolution of "full powers," which the Commune had accorded to the former Committee of Public Safety—and the minority members perceived the trap into which they had so guilelessly fallen.[1] Delescluze was absent at the time; he subsequently declined to form part of the Committee, owing to the duties of War delegate which he had assumed, and to the fact that his health was far from being satisfactory. Billioray was elected in his place. Thus constituted, all the members of the Committee of Public Safety, except Gambon, had appertained to the Comité Central, and all were in sympathy therewith.

Before closing the sitting of the 9th May the Commune decided to meet only three times per week in future, instead of daily; this was a sufficiently frequent assemblage after full powers had been deputed to a Committee. The additional time which the members of the Commune would thus have at their disposal was to be employed at their respective mairies in superintending and directing the local administrations. To counterbalance this centrifugal arrangement it was decided that the Committee of Public Safety should sit in permanence at the Hôtel de Ville.

The Comité Central had presumedly been struck a blow by the appointment of Delescluze as Delegate of War, but it failed to alter its conduct, and immediately evidenced its determination not to do so by appointing Edouard Moreau as civil delegate at the side of Delescluze.[2] Moreau was a man of ambition and of some sterling qualities, but he believed in the impotence of the Commune and the prior rights of the Comité of which he was the moving spirit. The new Committee of Public Safety agreed to this appointment; when Delescluze complained of it, all that was done was to change the nominal functions of Moreau without in the least altering his actual position of surveillant and co-delegate at the War Office. At this moment Moreau was the practical dictator of the movements of the federate army; but he was compelled, by virtue of the representative position of the Commune and his own lack of political influence, to wield his power under modest and even retiring auspices.

[1] Lefrançais, p. 294. [2] Du Camp, t. iv. p. 95. *La Vérité*, p. 373.

The detention of Rossel was of short duration. The Military Commission had confided his person to the care of Avrial, who, being friendly to Rossel, wished to be relieved of so invidious a duty. The day following Rossel's arrest, Avrial appealed to the Commune to receive Rossel and adjudicate finally upon him. The Commune assented, despatched Charles Gérardin to fetch Rossel from an adjoining room—and waited expectantly. As Gérardin did not return, a search was made, and it was then discovered that he and Rossel had vanished together. Bergeret was deputed to arrest the fugitives, but he never found them, though they remained hiding in Paris.

Military chiefs—amateur, as Eudes and Bergeret, or professional, as Cluseret and Rossel—had been a failure in the conduct of the war, judging them simply by the standard of victories attained. It was now the turn of one to direct who, though he in former years had been a skilful duellist, laid no claim to be anything but a civilian. Delescluze possessed a brilliant, though somewhat narrowed intelligence; his public career, extending over forty years, had been chequered by imprisonments and exiles, and relieved only by the estimation in which he was held by a great number of his fellow-countrymen. He had never sought wealth nor honours, but had striven nobly and with undiverted aim for the advancement of popular ideas, and what may be termed popular justice, in so doing, falling foul of monarchical, imperial, and even republican governments. Ever honest and upright, stoical and austere, his past was without serious blemish, and his sufferings and sacrifices compelled respect and admiration. His sincerity and belief in the righteousness of the Communal cause were, like Varlin's, unquestionable. His tolerance of and acquiescence in the various despotic and unjust proceedings of the Commune displays the faulty side of his intellect; but this aberration was identified with his general policy, and was above the pettiness which characterized so many of his colleagues.

Much was expected from Delescluze's occupation of the War Office. He was energetic, able, strong-willed, and possessed more prestige than any other active Communist. On the other hand he lacked much experience in the art of governing and of disciplining men. He was first of all a *littérateur*: from the

life avocation of journalist it is not easy at the age of sixty-five to turn one's self successfully into a systematic and powerful ruler of humanity. This was, however, what the Commune needed: it had too many mediocrities, too many light-souled bouncers; too many commanders disputing one with another as to who should be pre-eminent—what it wanted was one strong iron hand. Even at this late hour, such a man might stem the tide of Versaillais successes, which is still slowly but undoubtedly flowing. Fighting has developed in the federates their redeeming qualities—without which are none—and there is no knowing what tremendous force they are capable of being welded into. Is Delescluze the man at last to organize victory?

The Versaillais were drawing nearer to the fortifications, and preparing extensive trenches and earthworks for their own protection. Sèvres and St. Cloud were already occupied by them, the village of Vanves became so on May 11th, and Fort Vanves seemed, in consequence, likely soon to share the fate of its neighbour at Issy. Nevertheless, the slow progress of the Government troops caused considerable dissatisfaction at Versailles, at which place it was thought that Paris ought to have been entered long ago. Thiers had, by endeavouring to gain a surreptitious entrance, done his utmost to realize that thought, but all the plots and intrigues had miscarried. The efforts which the army was making could not, in the opinion of its military chiefs, be increased. The National Assembly, however, did not accept this view in its entirety, and Thiers on May 11th was questioned, urged, and badgered until he became petulant and irritated. The Assembly was turbulent and recriminatory; it demanded a speedy termination of the conflict. "Accord me yet eight days," exclaimed Thiers in desperation, "and the task shall be accomplished."

May 11th. In Paris the Committee of Public Safety showed of what mettle it was made by deciding that Thiers' house should be demolished, and his goods divided amongst various institutions. The demolition and partition were begun forthwith, and in a few days only an unsightly ruin remained in Place Georges, where Thiers' house had stood. Thiers' "eight days" and this wrecking of his house breathed the same spirit—

one wherein all conciliatory or generous feelings were completely absent. It was this spirit which more and more dominated the actions of the Commune. An example of magnanimity might perchance have modified its intensity, but from Versailles, whence alone such an example could come, there appeared nothing but wrath and vengeance. The Government and the Commune were in this struggle like two fighting cocks—mercy was an unthought-of quality, and the death of one of the combatants could alone end the fray. The second Committee of Public Safety personified this extreme bitterness and malignity almost to perfection; the one weak member was Billioray, who, however, was relentless enough for all ordinary purposes. It was partly goaded on to the adoption of this unmitigated hatred by the knowledge that in the impending supreme fight the Commune was practically certain to be defeated, and in that case its leaders would be sure to be severely dealt with. The Commune dared not acknowledge this openly: it showed a bold face to the federates, and exhorted them to fight stubbornly against their oppressors and the tyrannical monarchists, as the National Assembly was termed, and it endeavoured to cultivate the idea that the Communal regime meant liberty, progress, and justice, whilst from the Versaillais only the reverse of these blessings could be hoped for.

May 12th. In pursuance of this aim it made a first gratuitous delivery from the pawnshops of pledges that were under twenty francs value: a measure which benefited the poorer people of Paris, and glorified the federate cause in their eyes. The whole policy of the Commune became one of Expedience, and the higher virtues of civilization were considered only so far as they served this end. At the instigation of Rigault and Cournet, an attempt was at last made to force the Bank of France, for which the moment seemed favourable. The War Office was still in confusion after Rossel's departure; Beslay was ill, and a truculent servant was at hand in the person of Le Moussu, who had gained notoriety by closing churches and unearthing skeletons. Le Moussu and a detachment of federates went upon their errand to the Bank, but the armed force within it showed no disposition to evade a conflict, and these federates were not anxious to precipitate

one, so the threatened attack passed away, and the Bank still remained a self-contained stronghold in the midst of enemies.[1] Rigault's spleen was directed against Cournet for this failure, and Cournet's position was shaken.[2] Rigault was not a man to be trifled with, either in large or small affairs. Of the latter an instance occurred also on the 12th of May.

The previous day he had caused to be arrested Allix, the member of the Commune, on the ground of his insanity, which had become palpable. The Commune released Allix, but Rigault, not to be overruled, rearrested him the next day on the charge of having broken the seals, which, by order of the Committee of Public Safety, had been affixed to the mairie of the 8th arrondissement, over which Allix had presided. This charge was perfectly true, but the offence was excusable and even justifiable, after the Commune had released Allix; only a person of Rigault's vindictiveness would have ventured to rearrest him. Rigault, however, and the Committee of Public Safety were of like mind; what one did, the other supported, and the Communal body, having delegated full powers to the latter, had left itself no grounds for interference either with this or any other action that it might choose to take.

The ranks of the federates were greatly perturbed by an announcement made by the Committee of Public Safety that a terrible plot for the overthrow of the Commune had been discovered, but that numerous arrests of guilty persons had been made, and their punishments would be exemplary. Plots for the opening of one of the gates of Paris by underhand means were in constant operation, and their subversion was frequently unconsciously arrived at by officials of the Commune. On May 8th a plot had been intercepted, and one of the participators in it—a federate colonel—arrested.[3] On May 11th a Madame Veysset was imprisoned, though on no special charge—her husband was suspected of engaging in treasonable negotiations with the enemy, and in default of finding him his wife was secured. Veysset was, in fact, making endeavours to buy over to the Versailles cause Dombrowski, the Polish commander

[1] Bargès, p. 163. [2] Du Camp, t. iii. p. 237.
[3] Dalsème, p. 225.

of the western army of federates.[1] On May 12th an alleged spy had been shot at Fort Bicêtre on very shallow evidence of his culpability. There was so much treason in the air, so many spies and traitors about, using false names and disguises, permeating the federate army through and through, that the Committee of Public Safety meditated applying a stringent measure by which every person's identity and character should be instantly determined.

Even the divisional commanders were suspected. Dombrowski has been referred to, but the others were not exempt from suspicion. To guard against treachery from these high officials, delegates from the Commune were ordered to accompany them, ostensibly to associate the civil to the military element, in imitation of the great revolution of 1793, but really to watch the generals so that any attempt at treason might be instantly detected. Thus the member of the Commune Dereure was despatched to the side of Dombrowski; Johannard to La Cecilia; and Léo Meillet to Wrobleski. On May 13th another Versailles agent, a M. Lasnier, was arrested with a sum of nearly 30,000 francs upon him, intended for purposes of bribery amongst the federates. Another scheme, elaborated under M. Thiers' auspices, with which Lasnier was associated, was the manufacture of tricoloured armlets, which were to be distributed among the loyal Guards in Paris, and worn by them on the day when the Versaillais should enter the city, so that the good might be distinguished from the bad. By the treachery of a National Guard who was thought to be devoted to Versailles interests, this plan was revealed to the Commune, and was at once frustrated by the arrest of Madame Legros, who was manufacturing the armlets, and the seizure of her goods. After this the Committee of Public Safety issued a mandate requiring every citizen to bear upon him a card of identity which would be furnished by the police commissary of his district. This decree was of impossible execution, and serves only to show to what absurdities these administrators could commit themselves. The day of extreme measures was arrived, and the Communal chiefs and their emissaries justified every conceivable

[1] Du Camp, t. i. pp. 87, 89.

action by the magic wand of Expediency. To maintain their authority, to prolong their rule, to thwart and vex the Versaillais were the only considerations that had weight with them. War brings its own code of morals, which is barbaric from a barbarous era—and recognises only one arbiter, Force.

The feeling amongst the Communist leaders at this period was one of anxiety and disquietude. The fatal day of the Versaillais' entrance they all knew could not long be warded off, and thoughts of personal safety were not forgotten amidst the cares of political administration. That they would actually vanquish their adversary never seriously entered their minds, but they could not, or rather would not at the sacrifice of their own lives, withdraw from the course of action hitherto pursued. A similar feeling of uneasiness at the near approach of the final struggle beset the federates, amongst whom there was an increased repugnance to active service.

A large number of men drew their pay, but disappeared afterwards. Domiciliary searches were made by the Comité Central for refractories, but the people of Paris in many instances aided their escape, and it was impracticable to search every house. The glory of fighting for a Republic, a Commune, and Liberty, was on the wane, in face of the constant defeats which their army sustained and the absence of efficient leadership. A slight advantage gained by Dombrowski's men on the 11th, at Sablonville, was the chief and almost the sole variation from an otherwise uninterrupted series of failures or at least of insuccesses. That the Communist soldiers fought well in many quarters was undeniable—the bare fact that they kept the Versaillais outside of Paris for so long a period proves their possession of considerable stamina and courage. They were, however, being surely beaten. On the south side of Paris the Versaillais occupied, on the 13th May, the fort of Vanves—it also having been vacated by the federates. The possession of this fort and of Fort Issy enabled the Government army to inundate the walls of Paris, near the Point du Jour, with shells. The inhabitants of Passy had already taken flight—the defenders of that quarter could no longer hold themselves upon the ramparts, but were forced to take shelter underneath. Many of the Communal losses were flatly denied by the authorities at the Hôtel de Ville, but

the rank and file of the federates began to appreciate the unreliability of these official *démentis*, and to feel that they had espoused a losing cause.

Even the Committee of Public Safety, bellicose and determined as were its public utterances, felt a similar inquietude as to the eventual result of the struggle. Billioray manifested this anxiety before a partisan of the Versaillais, with a view, even then, to see whether a compromise favourable to the Commune might be effected; but the reply he received was discouraging, and he realized that it only remained for the Communists to resist until death.[1]

The Military Commission of Control was reformed with the hope that more pugnacious and ruthless members would strengthen the defence. The newly appointed were Bergeret, Cournet, Géresme, Ledroit, Lonclas, Sicard, and Urbain, an increase of two members over the original number. Cournet's presidency over the Police department had come to an end; he had been replaced in that office on the 13th May by Ferré, a man as pitiless as Rigault, and actuated by similar impulses.

The Committee of Public Safety invited navvies, carpenters, mechanics and others to offer themselves to take part in the defensive works which were to be executed to supplement the scientific barricades erected by Gaillard. The latter structures were not appreciated by Delescluze, as, though they were strong and formidable, they were too regularly built to be of service in a street war, and in fact were as likely to profit the attackers as the defenders.

Meanwhile the schism between the two parties in the Commune became accentuated. The minority day by day felt more aggrieved at the conduct of the majority. The former had been entrapped in regard to the appointment of the second Committee of Public Safety; it was being systematically left to itself when purely social measures came before the Commune for consideration; it found itself without even a consultative voice in the direction of the war, and it was ignored and insulted by the independent action of the majority, who met on other days than the appointed ones and debated amongst themselves the

[1] Daudet, pp. 29, 30.

current events, whilst on the regular days they failed for the most part to put in an appearance at the Hôtel de Ville, conscious that the minority were devoid of any real power. The 15th May was the date of a regular meeting. The minority, having made up its mind formally to protest against the tactics of the majority and against the devolution of full powers to the Committee of Public Safety, signed a declaration to this effect, and eleven of the signatories attended at the Hôtel de Ville at the usual hour, with the object of presenting it to the Commune. Only four or five members of the majority were there, and, after waiting an hour, the minority members withdrew without a sitting having been commenced. The declaration was sent to the press and appeared in the morning papers of the 16th. The signatories to it were: Beslay, Jourde, Theisz, Lefrançais, E. Gérardin, Vermorel, Clémence, Andrieu, Serailler, Longuet, Arthur Arnould, V. Clément, Avrial, Ostyn, Frankel, Pindy, G. Arnold, Jules Vallès, Tridon, Varlin, Courbet. Malon also publicly signified his adherence to the declaration, making in all twenty-two declarants, of whom twenty had formed part of the minority on the appointment of the first Committee of Public Safety. Of the remaining two, one—Frankel—had voted in the majority on that occasion, whilst the other—G. Arnold—was absent. All of these signatories were engaged in the labour of Communal administration, and some of them—Jourde, Varlin, Beslay, Theisz, Andrieu, Frankel—occupied leading positions. They did not relinquish their work, but intended, according to the words of their declaration, to give effect to their protest by no longer presenting themselves at the Communal sittings except on occasions when the Commune might have to judge any of its members.[1] This minority found itself drawn into the vortex of a revolution: not that social revolution which it had originally projected before its mind's eye, proceeding swiftly, firmly, and by a homogeneous and united populace, to the realization of those grand plans for the amelioration of suffering and the rendition of justice, which had formed the Utopia of socialistic advocacy, attracting in its course all the hitherto scattered elements of reform, amalgamating and solidifying them, spread-

[1] Lefrançais, pp. 301–304.

ing from Paris to the provinces, from France to Europe, from Europe to the entire civilized world, and establishing once and for all the Universal Brotherhood of Man—not this, but a revolution that had become narrowed to the simplest and most primitive of ideas—a struggle for existence, and which travelled along the most inglorious of paths—Civil War, and which threatened to swamp, at one and the same time, themselves and their theories. Nevertheless, these men formed the pick of the Commune for sincerity and for a real desire to benefit the poorer portion of humanity. Neither were they without ability, but they, along with the entire Commune, lacked experience, breadth of view, and, of first importance, a pre-eminent leader.

May 16th. The morning which exhibited to the eye of the Parisian the protest of the minority of the Commune, brought him also, in the pages of the *Journal Officiel*, an invitation to take part in a great fête which was to have place that day—in other words, to witness the fall of the immense Napoleonic monument in the Place Vendôme. Preparations for this culmination were at last completed, and the demolition was veritably to occur. Many people were incredulous, stupefied at the prodigious want of sense which the project displayed. Yet the column was undoubtedly to be deposed from its imposing position—it was already cut half through at the base, it was surrounded by scaffolding, and ropes and machinery were waiting wherewith, at the word of command, to pull it down. The denizens of the neighbourhood were in some alarm, lest the concussion which would be produced by the fall of such an immense weight should weaken the foundations or crack the walls of their houses. Windows were padded and shops closed everywhere in the vicinity. The ceremony was fixed for two o'clock, and a huge concourse of people assembled by that hour. Battalions of federates lined the square. Gaillard's barricade at the Rue de la Paix exit was partly broken down to permit the fall of the column. There was laid to receive the latter and to lessen the force of the impact a bed of rubbish and dung, these materials being purposely considered to be the most fitting to receive the relic of so uncivilized and despotic an era as that which the column commemorated![1] Hostility amongst the

[1] Lefrançais, p. 327.

crowd to the execution of the Communal decree had been anticipated, and Ferré had given instructions accordingly. The irritation was, however, more felt than expressed. A certain Comte de Cambis, a man of 78 years, who had lost a hand in the service of the Napoleon whose memory was to be so desecrated, expressed his opinions highly and openly, and struck with his mutilated limb a federate near him who had declared that Napoleon was a coward.[1] A lieutenant of Mobiles named Odelin, taking forcible steps to prevent the pursuit of the operations, was straightway shot dead.[2] These were the chief outward evidences of hostility. Various members of the Commune presented themselves at the spectacle—Bergeret himself in glittering attire; Félix Pyat, armed with two revolvers; Ferré, as head of the police; Courbet, the artist who had advocated the demolition; Ranvier, Fortuné, Miot, and others. Rochefort in an open carriage passed to and fro at the top of the Rue de la Paix, an object of mingled suspicion and commiseration.[3] Too aristocratic for revolutionary democracy, too democratic for constitutional plutocracy, he was distrusted in Paris, detested at Versailles. A man of grandiose desires, but continually tripped by his own calculating hesitancy. One even whispers that he is liable to be arrested by Rigault.

The breaking of a winch delayed the momentous event which was in every one's thoughts. A second machine was not at hand, and the delay caused thereby extended to over two hours, during which several military bands regaled the crowd with their music. During this interval Simon Mayer, whose carelessness on March 18th had so largely contributed to the assassinations of Generals Lecomte and Thomas, mounted the column, waved the tricoloured flag of France in his hands, then tore it and threw it into the air,[4]—the action being intended to signify that even thus was about to vanish all that history of France which the tricoloured flag was associated with!

At half-past five preparations were ready for the finale. Profound silence and expectancy reigned over the vast multitude, and every eye was fixed upon the huge upright column.

[1] Du Camp, t. ii. p. 286.
[2] Bargès, p. 17.
[3] Du Camp, t. ii. p. 277.
[4] *Ibid.*, t. ii. p. 287.

The turning of winches and the straining of ropes were heard, a slight oscillation of the monument was seen, then slowly it inclined forward, broke into three pieces, and fell upon the bed prepared for it. Loud shouts of "Vive la République!" and "Vive la Commune!" burst forth from federate throats, the cordon of guards was broken, and the throng of people rushed on to the fallen trophy. Bergeret, standing on one of the pieces, made a speech; Ranvier and Miot from the dismantled pedestal—over which now floated the Communal red flag—did likewise. Listen to these two. Miot: "Up to now our passion has been exerted only upon material things; but the day approaches where the reprisals will be terrible, and will strike that infamous reaction which seeks to crush us." Ranvier: "The Vendôme Column, Thiers' house, and the Expiatory Chapel are only material executions, but the turn of the traitors and of the Royalists will inevitably come, if the Commune is forced to it." [1]

The fall of the column produced less shock than had been anticipated. A slight tremor of the earth was felt, but not a window was broken nor apparently any damage done to the houses. As an object lesson in dynamics this toppling over of a huge monument was of slight account; in its moral aspect it is of tremendous significance. The demolition was not intended to serve, and did not serve one useful purpose; it was purely a wanton and deliberate act of vengeful spleen against an historic past that had emblazoned upon it the same name as that which bore the recently deposed Emperor; moreover, the column commemorated not so much Napoleon as Napoleon's army—that grand army which was the pride of France, and whose sufferings, endurances, and achievements, entirely apart from its leader, demand the highest admiration and respect: thus recollecting, one begins to perceive the depths of folly and of stupidity which lurked in some portions of humanity, and paraded under the cloaks of Reason and Liberty. Intolerance will never be eradicated, whether under sacerdotal, political, or artistic auspices; there it was, is, and will be to the end of time, kept in measured restraint for the most part, but ever ready to seize

[1] *Le* 18 *Mars*, pp. 326, 327. Du Camp, t. ii. p. 294. Daudet, p. 65.

an opportunity to break its bonds and assume the mastery. Despise it not wholly; even it has a purpose to serve. All the virtues and excellences in man are counterpoised by equivalent vices and imbecilities, even as the mountains of the earth do but equal the extent of its valleys. Nature is ever impartial. Take it to heart, you glorious nations of civilization —be at once Proud and Humble, for your Wisdom is linked with Folly, your Goodness with Cruelty, and your Genius with Inanity.

The fury of desperation began to show itself in the Commune. The angry menaces spoken after the fall of the column indicated the rage that was produced by the knowledge of the constantly tightening grip of the Versaillais upon the city. Despite the lying reports which the Committee of Public Safety and the Comité Central daily circulated in order to mislead the federates, and to instil into them that confidence which only a succession of victories could have inspired, the members of the Commune knew they were losing ground and that defeat loomed threateningly ahead of them. All their passions, their retaliative measures, and their exertions had failed to impede their enemy's progress, to retain or improve their fellow-citizens' sympathies, or to secure the much-coveted external aid. Several attempts in the latter direction had been made from time to time by Paschal Grousset; but all had either met with no response, or the answer had been promptly circumvented by the watchful energy of Thiers. Many of the large towns of France undoubtedly sympathised with the Commune, and even at this date all hope of transforming a mental into a material support had not quitted the Communist ranks. Once more, on May 16th, Grousset sent forth, by means of balloons, an appeal to the provinces—a final despairing cry for armed assistance. No more platonic professions of friendship—Rise up, Lyons, Marseilles, Bordeaux, and the rest of you—you have guns and ammunition, seize them. The time is for action. Paris will blow itself up rather than surrender—or it will transform itself into à cemetery and make of every house a tomb ! [1]

The provinces were doing something—in the way of talking

[1] *Le 18 Mars*, p. 325.

and writing. The league of the Republican Union still harped on Compromise and Conciliation, which to it, as to all other concatenations of Republicans or Socialists formed with that object, only meant that the Strong should bow down before the Weak—it got together at Lyons a gathering of delegates from various towns, which gathering did what it was convened for: sent a somewhat peremptory message to Thiers and the National Assembly at Versailles with the object of reducing the latter to a level with the Commune.[1]

Conciliation was, however, utterly chimerical. The Versaillais had opened an immense battery of guns at Montretout (St. Cloud), with which they swept the western portion of the fortifications with a terrible and continuous fire—whilst the Communists had shown their lack of a conciliatory spirit, not only by the demolition of the Vendôme column, but also by the suppression of six more journals[2] that had the unhappy faculty of telling something like the truth. Rigault and Ferré would not brook opposition so long as they could crush it. One of these journals had just been started by Vermorel—a minority member—in the hope of recalling the people and his colleagues of the majority to moderate ideas. Vermorel's own conversion to moderation came too late to profit either himself or the Commune. It had the result of jeopardising his liberty, and he knew he might be at any instant arrested. Should he fly? No—flight was cowardly; at whatever cost he would remain to the end.

May 17th. To guard against possible surprises, all railway trains arriving at Paris were ordered to stop for inspection at some distance from the fortifications—any train endeavouring to disregard this injunction would be instantaneously destroyed by the agency of explosives. Placards were posted throughout the city requiring all holders of petroleum and mineral oils to declare the same at the Hôtel de Ville within forty-eight hours—a request which was largely complied with. Declaration by the holders of phosphorus and chemical products also was demanded, but to this invitation the wholesale chemists and

[1] *Le* 18 *Mars*, p. 324.

[2] 15th May: *Le Moniteur Universel*, *L'Univers*, *L'Observateur*, *Le Spectateur*, *L'Etoile*, *L'Anonyme*.

druggists turned a deaf ear. Parties of *fuséens*—rocket-firers—were formed, this and the last-named order being under the authority of the Scientific Delegation of which Parisel was the head. The pursuit of refractories was carried on with increased ardour, women being employed in the work; entire districts were surrounded by federates, whilst the search was prosecuted within them. The women thus utilized had offered their services to Delescluze, and he had not dared to offend them by refusing; they were generally of a vile and brutal character—there were young women amongst them, but they were neither pretty nor gentle. These females were more like men, for they were entirely devoid of the charms which one usually associates with womanhood.

All these measures were undertaken with a determination, now become fixed in the minds of the Communist leaders, to defend Paris by all means and to the last extremity. In this general idea the minority of the Commune participated evenly with the majority. How it was to be put into shape was vaguely understood and as indefinitely expressed—it was an idea capable of such terrible expansion that few persons cared to reduce it into particulars. When it became known that the holders of phosphorus and chemicals had not declared their possession of these products, as demanded, it was publicly notified that their goods were liable to be forcibly seized for non-compliance with the order, and Jules Vallès, in his paper, the *Cri du Peuple*, referring generally to this subject, made use of a significant phrase: "If M. Thiers is a chemist, he will comprehend us."

The anti-religious mania, which in April had been so virulent, had recently been less obtrusive; now it burst out again with its old vehemence and passion. Rumour had it that the church of Nôtre Dame des Victoires, situated close to the Bank, had been the scene of miraculous occurrences, mysterious crimes, and so forth—it was enough. Rigault being informed of these reports, a battalion of federates was at once sent to the church, under the command of the skeleton investigator, Le Moussu, who invaded the building, imprisoned the priests whom he found there, broke the statues, destroyed the religious emblems, desecrated the tombs in search again for skeletons, pillaged everything of value, and turned the edifice into a federates'

pandemonium. Many bodies were exhumed, and the next day the skeletons were publicly exhibited.[1]

Whilst that work was proceeding, the Commune had assembled—it was the day for a regular meeting. The majority members had read the published declaration of the minority stating that they would not again attend the Communal sittings. Much, therefore, to their surprise, there were present at this meeting fifteen out of the twenty-two signatories to that declaration; viz., Courbet, Frankel, Pindy, G. Arnold, Vallès, Jourde, Theisz, Vermorel, Clémence, Andrieu, Serailler, Arthur Arnould, V. Clément, Avrial, and Ostyn.[2] Had they recanted? Frankel avowed that he for one had; the others were less clear, and had not made up their minds. One thing from their action is evident—that such weak and indecisive intelligences are not the stuff from which to find men capable of steering a wise course through troubled waters.

There was a full gathering at this meeting of the Commune, sixty-six members being present. Urbain announced that an ambulance woman, whilst engaged in tending some wounded federates, had been first violated and then killed by Versailles soldiers. A gross charge, supported by scanty evidence. It was, however, sufficient for Urbain's purpose, which was not to avenge the *ambulancière*, but to intimidate the Versaillais. In retaliation for the alleged violation and murder, he demanded the execution of ten of the imprisoned hostages within twenty-four hours. J. B. Clément supported the demand, and was about incidentally to ask a question of Parisel, the chief of the Scientific Delegation, when numerous members shouted, "Secret Committee! Secret Committee!"[3] Why were they so afraid of publicity in regard to Parisel's doings? That innocent-looking Scientific Delegation; what was it about?

The Commune returned to open meeting, and decided upon the immediate execution of the decree of April 5th referring to the hostages.[4] Rigault brought in a project of law to regulate the details of accusation and trial. The matter did not seem to be altogether on a sound legal footing, and Protot, the delegate of Justice, was inclined, as befitting the head of the law, to exact

[1] Du Camp, t. ii. p. 309. *Un Officier*, pp. 202, 203.
[2] *Journal Officiel*, May 18th. [3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.*

respect for the formalities of judicial procedure. Rigault, a stickler for ceremonial observances when it suited him, and equally regardless of such when it did not, overrode all objections by declaring emphatically that what the time required was a veritable Revolutionary Tribunal. The Commune lent itself to Rigault's demands, and the fate of the hostages was virtually left with him. Jurors to the number of a hundred had already been drawn to form the "*juries d'accusation*": drawn from the National Guards; inspired with deep hatred of the Versaillais and their accomplices, amongst whom the hostages were reckoned; to be led and harangued by a relentless and unscrupulous Procureur, with the knowledge that their own lives were not safe if they failed to realize what was expected of them. These jurors were a hollow machinery for giving a semblance of judicial procedure to trials wherein the ruling motive will not be Justice, but a grim Expediency and Vengeance.

Whilst the Commune deliberated that afternoon, news arrived that a terrible explosion of war ammunition, with most disastrous results, had occurred at a large cartridge manufactory in the Avenue Rapp, Champ de Mars. A wave of consternation passed over the meeting; the explosion was immediately attributed to Versaillais incendiarism; the conviction was strengthened that extreme repressive measures must be employed.

The cartridge manufactory blew up at a quarter to six with a report so tremendous that it was heard miles off. The building was shattered to pieces; neighbouring houses were wrecked, and millions of leaden bullets, with quantities of other projectiles, were sent hurtling through the air. The few persons who were inside the manufactory at the time were killed; outside, there were numerous killed and wounded, of whom many were women and children; some of these were struck by the flying missiles a great distance away. A fire burst out, and it was with difficulty that some tons of powder which had escaped the explosion were removed from the flames which followed. Paris was horrified and panic-stricken; the Communal authorities made some arrests and perquisitions—they were bound to do something. They made announcements that a Court-Martial

was installed, that Justice would be speedily done, that an inquiry would be opened—the fact that an inquiry would be incompatible with swift Justice not being evident to them. Of all this nothing came; the cause of the explosion remains to this day unknown, and therefore speculations are idle as to political motives being concerned with it. In all probability the affair was purely accidental. Since, however, the Communists freely accused the Versaillais of having caused it, it is but fair to remember that in the Communist ranks there were traitors as well as spies, and that, if the explosion was not fortuitous, it was as likely to be produced by one party as by the other.

Even the Committee of Public Safety possessed a traitor within its midst. Billioray's anxiety had led him thus far. With other Communists, he had bargained to open the Point du Jour roadway to the Versaillais, who, disguised as National Guards, should arrive at that entrance during the night. The plan was not completed owing to the faithlessness of one of the plotters, Sérizier, who, having received the price of his perfidy, was indifferent to the performance of that which he had bargained to do. Thus it happened that the disguised Versaillais, upon presenting themselves to carry out the arrangement, were received with a mitrailleuse fire and forced to retreat.[1] The federates in the forts and on the ramparts were not to be easily surprised. Their watchfulness and exertions were redoubled, as they felt the supreme hour of conflict was drawing near. They returned the fire of the Versaillais' guns with energy, and it was largely to this fact that was due the extremely slow progress of the latter. The Government army, nevertheless, made some advances, chiefly under cover of the Bois de Boulogne, digging trenches and constructing heavy batteries wherewith to form a breach in the fortifications. Skirmishes between the combatants were of frequent occurrence, but of slight value or loss to either side.

On May 18th the Government troops, however, gained a signal advantage by carrying two barricades at Bourg-la-Reine, one of the most southern points in the fighting area, and seizing a mill at Cachan, close by, which had been made a place of

[1] *Un Officier*, p. 204. Du Camp, t. i. p. 195.

defence; in thus doing inflicting considerable loss upon the federates, of whom a hundred were killed and forty-eight made prisoners.[1] By this engagement, the Versaillais approached near to Arcueil and to the forts Bicêtre and Montrouge.

Elsewhere—in the Bois de Boulogne—the federates had their own peculiar gain to record. A boy, fifteen years old, was suspected of having carried letters between Versailles and Paris, and upon interrogation he admitted he had done so, and had received Versailles money for his services. Johannard, the civil delegate accompanying the general La Cecilia, and the latter, agreed that the boy must be shot; this was straightway accomplished.[2]

Inside the city, a further evidence of the merciless spirit which had come over the active Communists was seen in the publication, by the *Journal Officiel* and another paper, of an appeal from two Montmartites for the formation of a battalion to be called "Tyrannicides," the members of which should by any means and in all countries endeavour to kill every scion of the royal or imperial houses which had reigned over France. The appellants were persons of no consequence; the seriousness of their appeal rests in the publication of it by the professedly official organ of the Commune.

M. Borme, the chemist whose services had been requisitioned in April by the Scientific Delegation, now experienced the danger of being even negatively an accomplice of Versailles. He was arrested, being at last suspected of having manipulated the chemical compounds so that no explosives could be formed from them.

Another arrest effected was that of E. Clément, member of the Commune, who had been an agent of Police under the Empire. Aware that this fact, if known of his colleagues, would secure his instant imprisonment, Clément had taken advantage of his position of member of the Police Commission, to which he had been appointed on May 13th, to search the archives of the Prefecture, so as to withdraw from them the documents relating to himself. In doing this he was discovered, and Rigault at once sent him to Mazas prison. Clément made

[1] Macmahon, p. 12.

[2] *La Vérité*, p. 395.

the sixth member of the Commune who had been arrested, his predecessors being Assi, Bergeret, Cluseret, Allix, and Blanchet. If Rossel and Lullier be added, the list is increased to eight. The two latter had each been at the head of the federate army, and Rossel had some claim to be considered a member of the Commune, for he had been a candidate in the elections held on April 16th, but had received too small a number of votes to be elected, notwithstanding which, he had taken part in the deliberations of the Commune during his brief tenure of the chief military position. It cannot be considered surprising that so many of the Communist leaders suffered some of the unpleasant consequences of the malevolence and distrust which so markedly prevailed. Every breath of adverse opinion was instantly stigmatised as treasonable and treacherous, and bold or indiscreet speakers either were, or ran an imminent risk of being, incarcerated and detained as hostages. Priests had not even to offer this slight excuse to justify their being arrested. One of the Communal magistrates, before whom, on May 11th, the Abbé Vautier had been brought, declared that, "Before all, a priest is and must be culpable; it is for him to demonstrate his innocence,"[1] and this irrational antagonism was characteristic of the entire Police service under the Commune. When men can act like brigands to their opponents, they will not hesitate to act similarly towards their friends upon the least pretext.

The fate of the hostages began to excite alarm. Petitions were being signed amongst the religious communities for the release of the priests, for whose safety there seemed sufficient reason to fear, seeing that the Commune had determined to put into execution its decree of April 5th. Petitions, however, especially from such quarters, were useless instruments whereby to influence the Commune, which had practical considerations alone in view. It hoped, even yet, that the publication of the announcement relative to the hostages would cause the Versaillais to temporise, seek mediation, or somehow soften the rigour of their attitude, so as not to jeopardise the important lives which the Commune held in its grasp. Only in so far as

[1] 5me Conseil de Guerre, 19th Dec., 1872. Affaire Curé.

the hostages formed a lever whereby to stay the progress or lessen the implacability of the Versaillais were they valuable to the Commune, and the more hostages, the greater were the chances, according to it, of making terms with its enemy.

May 19th. Upon this principle, and locally instigated by the loss inflicted upon them the previous day at Bourg-la-Reine and Cachan, Léo Meillet, the Governor of Bicêtre, and Sérizier, each with a battalion of National Guards, surrounded the Dominican school of Albert the Great at Arcueil, and arrested there the entire community of Dominican fathers, pupils and domestics, to the number of thirty-nine persons. Of these, twenty-seven persons (males) were sent to Fort Bicêtre; twelve females were despatched to Paris, to the prison St. Lazare.[1]

The Commune had now about 200 clerical hostages, and a much greater number laical, the bulk of the latter being sergents de ville and gendarmes, who had been arrested on and about March 18th, not at that time as hostages, for which they were scarcely important enough; but they were clearly given that character on the day—May 19th—now under notice. Four juries of accusation had been formed and sat to adjudicate upon these unfortunate prisoners, who, at Rigault's demand, were brought before these juries so that a formal decision might be taken as to whether they were to be considered hostages or not. The judicial procedure employed was of the most superficial character. There were the presidents and the juries, all drawn from the National Guards; the Public Prosecutor, who was either Rigault or one of his substitutes, the prisoners and the public, the latter largely, if not wholly, of the Communist persuasion. The prisoners had no defenders, no friendly witnesses; they were swiftly examined and swiftly judged.[2] They were all alike innocent or guilty, as one may choose to view it, but the juries, in order to give a similitude of discriminating justice, and to show that they were not there merely to mechanically register Rigault's demands, acquitted here one and there another, without there being any real foundation for drawing such a distinction. That day and the next, thirty-six of these prisoners were, in this fashion, declared to be hostages.[3]

[1] Du Camp, vol. i. p. 211. [2] Rousse, p. 29.
[3] De la Brugère, pp. 165–168.

Rigault's imperious will further showed itself by the suppression of ten more newspapers,[1] and in the announcement now made that no new journals would be allowed until the end of the war. Rochefort's organ, the *Mot d'Ordre*, also ceased to appear, not because of suppression, but because Rochefort and his secretary deemed Paris too insecure for them. They escaped from the capital and went to Meaux, a place about twenty-five miles off, to the north-east, occupied by the German forces. There they were arrested by a police commissary, handed over first to the German authorities, and by them transferred to Versailles to M. Thiers.

The only political papers now left in Paris were those that advocated the views of the majority of the Commune—views that exhibited neither mercy, moderation, nor calmness, but were as vindictive and unreasoning as a vengeful boy that has been whipped. Personal liberty had come to such a pass that scarcely any but Communists dared to venture in the streets; trade and commerce, which before the Communal era had made some movement, though slight, towards a settling down and readjustment, were more than ever stagnant. The only activity was of a military nature, and this was spurred on by the incessant bombardment to which the fortifications were subjected. Thiers had said he would never bombard the city, and, nominally, this restriction was observed, though it was impossible to aim every cannon-shot with such accuracy that it should strike the ramparts and not fly over them. The Comité Central maintained its ascendancy over the administration of war, despite the objections of both Delescluze and the Commune, who were nevertheless compelled, by the exigencies of the situation, to tolerate much that they inwardly resented.

May 20th. The ill-concealed dissensions and antipathy betwixt these two governing bodies gave rise, on May 20th, to a joint public notification that there were no differences between them, but that from that date the Comité Central would enter into the functions of the administration of war—a palpable evidence of antagonisms and disagreements, seeing that the Comité

[1] 28 Floreal: *La Commune, L'Echo, L'Independance Française de Paris, L'Avenir National, La Patrie, Le Pirate, Le Républicain, La Revue des Deux Mondes, L'Echo de l'Ultramar, La Justice.*

Central had formally been invested with these functions so far back as May 5th. The document was signed, on behalf of the Communal Military Commission, by Bergeret, Champy, Géresme, Ledroyt, Lonclas, and Urbain, and, on behalf of the Comité Central, by forty of its members, the first name being that of Edouard Moreau. The name of Delescluze did not appear upon it, and this constituted a significant omission, for it was the civil Delegate of War who chiefly represented the Communal opposition to the Comité Central. Neither did the name of the Committee of Public Safety appear upon the document, and the statement it contained to the effect that unity existed in the administration of the war was therefore utterly delusive. It was the old fault of there being too many chiefs and too many aspirants for supreme authority, the result still being disorganization and confusion. Could the rest of France have been blotted out of existence for a few years, the Paris amateur governors might have gained experience, learnt submission to superiors, and evolved from their midst one or two capable leaders of men; but the fact cannot be too strongly brought home to all would-be reformers and rulers, that Nature will not be hurried in its efforts—that any attempt to produce in a week or a month that which demands the labour of years, or to establish either law or government that has not slowly, widely, and deeply grown to be the wish of the people—will be sure to bring a reaction or a Nemesis in its train, more or less terrible, according to the extent of the rupture of natural law which has been perpetrated.

The chief political error of the Paris Commune was of this character. It was eager to transform its own advanced views swiftly into practical existence, and it may be safely granted that the bulk of its members honestly believed that their views were for the welfare of the community. It, however, knew not the bear and forbear, the give and take, of good government; it was inflated with self-esteem, despising and crushing instead of learning from adverse opinion; it never realized that the regime of government is of less account than the government itself—that if it had used its splendid opportunity wisely and tolerantly it would have attracted to its support men who had hitherto held aloof, whereas by legislating and

acting wildly, intolerantly, impetuously, it had alienated much of the sympathy and good-will with which it started; in a word, it was much too hasty, having tried to jump its own generation into laws which might befit only the next or the third.

The Commune had, moreover, committed a cardinal error by not from the beginning taking a firm stand against the pretensions of the Comité Central, in whose hands the real revolutionary power had remained throughout; to whom also must be largely attributed the weakening of the force it controlled, by having permitted and even encouraged indiscipline. The day of account, however, is drawing near—the final struggle cannot be much longer delayed. In anticipation thereof barricades have been erected all over Paris—not the scientific semi-fortresses of Gaillard, but huge rough works, more suitable for the required purpose than that individual's constructions.

As yet, between the four chief military authorities in Paris — Committee of Public Safety, Delegate of War, Military Commission, and Comité Central — there was no plan of defence arranged—not even a commander-in-chief appointed, so stubbornly was the abolition of this post adhered to. Of the divisional commanders, there were Dombrowski and La Cecilia in the west; Wrobleski in the south; Eudes at the Palace of the Legion of Honour, and Bergeret at the Corps Legislatif. The main attack of the Versaillais could come only from the western side, yet there was no concentration of federates there to resist an attempt at entrance—nay, the ramparts and fortifications for a considerable extent were absolutely forsaken, owing to the severe cannonade which came from the enemy's guns. From the Point du Jour to Porte Maillot, the federates had disappeared; Passy was deserted, and the Versaillais might have had an easy entrance at once had they known the state of affairs at this point.

The members of the Commune were scattered all over Paris, each in his own arrondissement; the federates likewise were distributed over the city. Concentration anywhere there was none; each arrondissement was left to defend itself with its own proportion of soldiers, its own officers, and its own members of

the Commune.[1] We cannot agree to combine—we can agree only to separate!

The Bank of France also believed the eventful hour to be nigh, and was more chary of responding to the Communist demands for money, though it continued to yield to their menaces, fearful lest the angry federates might refuse to obey their officers, and should force and sack the place of their own will. It, however, took the precaution of depositing all its bullion and paper money in its lowest cellar, and then blocking up with sand the staircase that led to it.[2] The anxiety of the Bank was well founded.

The federates must have their pay; many, in fact, got more. In the Communal commissariat there were thieves so numerous, so systematic in their depredations, and so uncontrolled, that the Director of the Intendance informed Cournet that a saving of from two to three hundred thousand francs per day might be effected if thefts could be prevented.[3] Whereupon the Commune decreed Death to the Thieves until the end of the war.[4] The decree was never enforced, but there is no doubt that stealing was a prevalent practice among the federates, the most notable direction in which this inclination manifested itself being in regard to wines and edibles, which were taken as a matter of course whenever opportunity offered. For this grave fault the common federate was less to blame than his superiors, who set him a pernicious example; there is no army in the world that would be proof against such temptations under analogous circumstances.

The acute danger to which the Bank of France was now exposed was but one symptom of the utter recklessness that had come over federates and their chiefs. A period of almost uncurbed power and indulgence appeared to be coming to an end, and the struggle of war involved in that finale did not appear so frightful to these unhappily obtuse intelligences as the contemplated loss of their unwonted privileges, which galled them exceedingly and made them reckless, so that their actions were frequently marked by complete indifference to consequences. One result of this spirit was the hatred shown to the

[1] Lefrançais, p. 315.
[2] Du Camp, t. iii. p. 247.
[3] *La Vérité*, p. 396.
[4] *Ibid.* Du Camp, t. iv. p 88.

person of the United States Ambassador, who had throughout remained in Paris, and had exerted himself on several occasions to procure the release of prisoners or a mitigation of their hardships. Only on the 18th inst., ten of the female prisoners belonging to the Convent of Picpus were liberated at his request.[1] The federates resented his interference, and their anger went to such lengths as to call for the peremptory intervention of the commander of the German army of occupation—the United States ambassador being in charge of German interests in Paris as well as those of his own country. The threatened international offence was averted, respect for German wishes surmounting, in Communist ranks, every other consideration. Only in this connection were there left to them any prudence or self-control; in regard to the Versaillais their passions and venom was of unlimited malignancy. The demand made by the Scientific Delegation for information of the stores of chemical products and mineral oils was put into conjunction with various veiled and even open menaces as to the fate reserved for Paris should the Versaillais succeed in forcing an entrance. The fears thus aroused were transmitted to M. Thiers by persons of position and loyalty, in the hope of inducing him to come to terms with the Commune rather than jeopardise the immense treasures of art and architecture which Paris contained. Thiers was incredulous, he had heard these anxieties expressed before—nay, on all sides, people repeated the same thing to him, but he believed it not: "the federates say they will do so and so, but they will never dare to do it."[2] These Communists are great boasters, talking high and acting low; all their threats about destroying Paris are of the same strain and kindred—"they will never dare to do it."

Thiers had one more opportunity for being conciliatory. On May 20th delegates from the Republican Union for the Rights of Paris went to Versailles to make another attempt at mediation. The Committee of Public Safety so far relaxed its bitter hostility to Thiers as to instigate this errand.[3] Even

[1] Du Camp, t. i. p. 143. [2] *Ibid.*, t. iv. p. 272.
[3] *Le* 18 *Mars*, p. 331.

at the eleventh hour it thought an acceptable compromise might be possible. But no; the time had gone by for concession or conciliation, and Thiers refused to see the delegates. The final blow was about to be struck, and the issue was now with *it* and not with negotiation. Are not the eight days expired which Thiers demanded from the National Assembly? There is not yet a breach made in the walls of Paris for the Versaillais to pass through, but be sure its advent is not far removed. Thiers is a man of his word, and though precisely eight days have not sufficed to witness the beginning of the end, eleven, or at the utmost twelve days, will certainly enter into that epoch.

See! at one o'clock this mid-day, the breach batteries, which have now been finished and armed, commence to belch forth their vomit of steel on to the hapless Portes Auteuil and St. Cloud, assisted therein by the guns from Forts Issy, Vanves, and Valérien, and from the recently erected batteries of Montretout and Boulogne. The cannonade before had been destructive, it is now terrible, ruinous—driving away the last remnant of the inhabitants of Passy and Auteuil. Here, the shells fall like a torrential rain, four thousand in an hour,[1] bursting and scattering their fragments all about; wrecking not houses merely but streets, mixing and mingling in an indescribable confusion and *débris* all the things that one associates with stability and comfort. The reply made by the federates from other parts of Paris to this frightful bombardment was weak and intermittent; it scarcely merited to be considered a reply.

Through the deserted streets near the fortifications at Passy a solitary man named Ducatel quickly walked and made observations, then swiftly came away. He was a surveyor of roads and bridges, and had previously been an officer of marines. Some twelve days before, Ducatel had departed from Paris by the St. Denis gate, and had made the acquaintance of General Douay, commander of the Versailles fourth army corps, whose troops were preparing for the attack on the Point du Jour; he had on that and on subsequent occasions given

[1] Mottu, p. 47.

the Versailles general valuable information relative to the federate defences in Passy and Auteuil, and had enabled him to rectify some errors of aim which the Versailles gunners had made.

After making his observations, Ducatel again went his round-about and perilous way to General Douay, and informed him that Passy was deserted and the federates had all withdrawn from the fortifications; a breach would soon be made in the ramparts, therefore be ready for any emergency! Douay moved his troops nearer to the *enceinte.* At eight o'clock the heavy cannonading ceased for the night.

At Neuilly and Sablonville fighting had been in progress all day, and also round about the forts Bicêtre and Montrouge. In all these places the Communists suffered loss. In the west, Dombrowski felt it was useless further to maintain the conflict outside the city walls, and he gradually withdrew his men into the interior. La Cecilia did likewise with his men from the Bois de Boulogne. In the south, Montrouge was suffering severely, the fort there was scarcely tenable. Notwithstanding which, despatches were published in Paris which stated that the Versaillais' attacks had been repulsed, with great loss to their enemy and an insignificant loss to themselves—statements which concealed the really critical position in which the fort was placed. The withdrawal of Dombrowski was dictated by military considerations—of this there is no need to doubt, though his conduct can be viewed from another light. Veysset, whose agency had been adopted by the Versailles authorities, had made an arrangement with Dombrowski, whereby the latter and his staff were to be bought over for the sum of one and a half million francs, giving in exchange to the Versaillais the fortifications in an undefended state from the Porte du Jour to the Porte Wagram. Did Dombrowski accept this arrangement with sincerity or duplicity? However this might be, Veysset was the first to fail in keeping his respective share of the engagement, which, in his case, was to pay over an initial sum of money to Dombrowski. The reason for the failure was a sufficient one, but the Polish general was in ignorance of it. Veysset had been compelled, in his negotiations with Dombrowski—which necessarily had to be conducted with the utmost caution

—to employ as an intermediary a woman named Muller. This woman betrayed him, and Veysset was arrested the 20th May by the agents of Ferré, who, as well as Rigault, had been in search of him for some time.[1]

[1] Du Camp, t. i. pp. 87, 89, 90.

THE EIGHT DAYS OF MAY

First Day: Sunday, May 21st, 1871.

AT daybreak the breach batteries and all the chorus of surrounding artillery took up their thunder-song with undiminished energy. These works of man outrivalled the natural elements by their tremendous booming and their disastrous power. No lightning's flash can accomplish such ruin as can the modern ordnance projectile. A few centuries back the thought would have been incomprehensible; even so the visionary and ridiculed idea of to-day may be realized in the future.

Two members of the Commune, Vésinier, editor of the *Journal Officiel*, and Lefrançais, the first president of the Communal *séances*, paid separately a visit of inspection to Passy. Each noted and reported to the War authorities the unprepared state of this quarter for withstanding an attack. Not any action however—save one, to be presently mentioned—for combating an offensive movement and for strengthening the defences of Passy was forthcoming. The belief in the impregnability of the fortifications still lingered, and, with the assurance that in the last resort Paris could hold its own in the streets, combined to perpetuate the Do Nothing policy in respect of Passy.

Ducatel also revisited Passy, observed the dismantled parapets, the crumbling battlements, the demolished barricades, the ruined gateways of St. Cloud and Point du Jour, and a still larger area of deserted streets. The time seemed to him propitious for an immediate entrance, and he set off in all haste to acquaint General Douay therewith. Scarcely proceeded more than a few minutes on his way, he reflected that to reach Douay by the St. Denis route would occupy some hours, whilst

the journey was fraught with dangers and difficulties. He turned, ran back to the gateway of St. Cloud, notwithstanding that the artillery fire was as heavy as ever, climbed to the top of a house, and perceived some Versailles soldiers not more than about seventy yards distant. Descending, and seizing a rake handle from amongst the wreckage of a fallen house, he fastened to it a white silk handkerchief that served him for a necktie, then mounted to the top of the nearest bastion of the ramparts, and waved his improvised flag over his head. The shots fell like gigantic hail, thick and fast, and several times the clouds of dust they set up enveloped him, but he was undaunted and continued to wave his flag. Before long the signal was seen, and an intrepid officer, a frigate commander named Trève, ran up to the fortifications, alone as he thought, but closely followed by a sergeant who was determined to guard him against any possible treachery. "Paris is yours," cried Ducatel, "all is abandoned, let your troops enter." Trève and the sergeant, Coutant, crossed, by means of a broken drawbridge beam, the moat which separated them from the ramparts, entered into Paris, verified Ducatel's statement, then went back to their comrades. Engineers close at hand speedily advanced and constructed a bridge over the moat. General Douay was apprised by telegraph of the occurrence, Ducatel's name in some unaccountable manner being given in the message as Clément. Douay informed the commander-in-chief, Macmahon; orders were given to the forts and batteries to cease firing, and to the troops to advance. Douay, not knowing the name of Clément, sent instructions to his soldiers to keep Ducatel under guard, for fear he was but leading them into a trap. Ducatel therefore had not the satisfaction of witnessing the entrance of the Versaillais *en masse* into Paris, which he had so notably contributed to bring about.[1]

Two companies of the line, some sappers and artillerymen with 6 in. mortars, were the first to pass through the Porte St. Cloud. They were soon followed by two brigades of the same army corps (Douay's), whilst other corps, under Generals Clinchant, Ladmirault, and Vinoy, were coming up behind.

[1] Du Camp, t. ii. pp. 370–378, 468–470. De la Brugère, p. 178. Macmahon, p. 14.

When Douay entered into the city he immediately asked to see the supposed Clément, whereupon the mistake of name was discovered and Ducatel was set at liberty. By this time it was night, and about 20,000 Versailles soldiers were within the walls of Paris, occupying as yet only the deserted territory.

Orders further to advance soon arrived. A division under General Vergé marched forward to capture a formidable barricade on the Quai de Passy, Ducatel serving as guide. As they arrived near it, a few shots were exchanged, the federates behind shouted, "We surrender!" and Ducatel boldly but imprudently went forward to speak to them. He was instantly seized and carried off a prisoner.[1] The barricade was then taken by the Versaillais, and advance made to the Place du Trocadero, where there was another immense barricade. At this point there were several battalions of federates, who had so little expected the Versaillais, that 1,500 men were taken prisoners and the place secured almost without striking a blow.

Other divisions of the Versailles army followed the line of the ramparts, seized and opened the Portes Auteuil and Passy, outside which further troops were massed waiting for an entrance, and, by going behind the strongly fortified place of the Château de la Muette—which during the afternoon had been Dombrowski's headquarters—possessed themselves of it with little trouble. The western portion of Passy and Auteuil were now in the hands of the Versaillais. To accomplish this result severe fighting had not been necessary; the bulk of the federates flew at the first approach of their enemy; it was clear that they were surprised at his proximity. It is further evident that Dombrowski's action in drawing the federates away from these strongly fortified places had contributed materially to the Versaillais success. Had the Château de la Muette and the Place du Trocadero been defended in any way commensurate with their strategical importance and their military resisting power, only a frightful struggle could have wrenched them from the federates.

The sombre darkness of the night, the unexpectedness of their entrance and consequent absence of instructions, and

[1] Du Camp, t. ii. p. 380.

the need to augment their forces, necessitated a halt in the Versaillais' advance within the city; the troops were on friendly ground in Passy and Auteuil, and though there were few of the regular inhabitants of these quarters to be found, it was reassuring to feel that no enemy lurked in ambush there.

During the night a patrol established on the Quai de Billy had the good fortune to arrest two members of the Commune, Assi and Amouroux. The latter having given a false name for the purpose of evading responsibility, his identity was not discovered until subsequently. Outside the fortifications, both north and south of the river, troops were being brought forward in readiness to enter the city and to prepare for a further progression in the morning.

Meanwhile, how fared the Commune at headquarters on this eventful Sunday, the first day of the republican month Prairial? Sundays under the Communal regime were still that which, in Paris, they were under previous regimes, days of enjoyment and relaxation. The weather was fine, military bands played in the Tuileries gardens and elsewhere, and some pleasant commotion was caused at the Hôtel de Ville by the muster and parade of a novel fighting force, predestined, in consequence of Lefrançais' and Vésinier's reports, to the Château de la Muette, there to engage and vanquish the "ignoble" Versaillais. This force consisted of sailor artillerymen on horseback—much eulogy was spent upon it as it manœuvred before the members of the Commune on the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, and hopes ran high in the spectators' breasts. Later in the day it was despatched on its errand. Arriving in the neighbourhood of the Trocadero, it encountered masses of rushing federates, who shouted, "We are betrayed—Treason!" it also took fright, turned about and fled.

There was a Communal *séance* in the afternoon, and members came in goodly array to participate in the conclave. Business was twofold. There was an order of the day relative to Cluseret, whose imprisonment, in the opinion of many members, had lasted long enough. This subject was anticipated and regular. An unexpected topic formed the other and chief item of discussion. In the *Journal Officiel* that morning members had been astounded to read an announcement signed by Grêlier, a

member of the Comité Central, stating that all inhabitants of Paris were invited to return to their dwellings within forty-eight hours, otherwise their titles of "*rente*" and the *grand-livre* would be burnt. The wealthy inhabitants of Paris were at Versailles, in the provinces, abroad; it would be most difficult for any of these absentees, however near, to return at present, for ingress into Paris had been prohibited by the investing lines of the Government army. Moreover, this notice of Grêlier's was published without the authority or knowledge of the Commune, and the latter was naturally indignant at the fact. Jourde and Lefrançais made themselves the mouthpieces of this feeling, and the Committee of Public Safety was enjoined to take repressive measures against Grêlier and his accomplices—a formal condemnation which satisfied the Commune's wounded dignity without entailing a conflict with its powerful auxiliary, the Comité Central.

Jourde, as head of the Finances, was especially aggrieved that such a notice as Grêlier's should have been issued. Confiscation of paper values and account books appeared of a different tenour to the accountant than mere confiscation of property, with which he had nothing personally to do. Jourde was, however, anxious to preserve his department from the spoliating activity which circulated around him. In these latter days he had experienced on a gigantic scale the difficulty of making ends meet. At the one end were the various officers, delegates, representatives, commissions and what not, pertaining either to the Commune, the Comité Central, the War Department, or the Committee of Public Safety, all making demands upon him for that which was needful, and often for that which was redundant. Federates were exacting; officials were pilfering and not exerting any control; the last ten days had witnessed an expenditure of nearly half a million francs per day in excess of the average.[1] At the other end were the receipts from *octroi* and market dues, tobacco manufactory, etc., all sadly insufficient to meet the disbursements; there remained only the Bank of France, upon which he was compelled to make calls every day. Already the Town account therein was overdrawn to the extent

[1] Du Camp, t. iv. p. 89.

of more than six and a half million francs, and the Bank anathematised a system which was the antithesis of commercial honour. Between pacifying and answering the domineering holders of Communal orders to pay, and surmounting the increased antipathy of the Bank to yield to his demands, Jourde had been in a current of contested interests from morning till night. Not a few members of the Commune considered the immunity of the Bank from seizure as an act of impolicy. Up to the 3rd of May the Commune had reaped from the Bank that which it had not sown, but to which, as representing the city of Paris, it was in some way entitled; since that date, being unable to pay its way legitimately, unable to borrow because no one believed it would ever live to repay, it had exacted its demands only by the highwayman's method, "Your money or your life!" To such a pass was the Commune come, whilst it nevertheless paraded and paraphrased the names of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, and Justice to an extent which showed that these were simply parrot-cries, learnt by rote, repeated without effort and without comprehension of their meanings.

After the Grêlier incident and Jourde's grievances had been disposed of, the Commune discussed the affair Cluseret. It practically admitted that the evacuation of Fort Issy on April 30th was not chargeable against the then Delegate of War. Having questioned Cluseret relative to certain rumours which tended to accuse him of treason, he was finally liberated on the understanding that he would assist in the defence of Paris.

Whilst the Cluseret discussion proceeded, Billioray, in an agitated condition, arrived and read a despatch which he had received from Dombrowski, stating that the Versaillais had entered by the Porte St. Cloud into the city. It was seven o'clock at night; the *séance* continued; a secret sitting was held, at which the subject of discussion was to burn Paris rather than surrender it, but the result, if any was arrived at, is not known.[1] Business ended, the members went to their respective arrondissements, in accordance with the decision arrived at on May 9th.

The direction of the defences was left in the hands of Delescluze and the Committee of Public Safety. Dombrowski was

[1] Evidence of Barral de Montaut before 3me Conseil de Guerre.

in the western portion of Paris, meeting, or pretending to meet, the advance of the Government troops, whilst slowly and really withdrawing his forces towards Montmartre. The district where barricades and earthworks were formidable, and where the federates should have been massed in great numbers, was already denuded of men. Reliance was placed upon barricades and street fighting—that last and too familiar resort of Parisian democracy—upon individual impulse, opportunist strategy, and the grand principles of Communal freedom. Alas! grand principles avail little when face to face with an antagonist who despises them.

It was a melancholy condition of things for any body of men to be, by their own vanity, blindness, and impotency, reduced to—a condition immeasurably inferior to that of numerous barbaric races. During the night Delescluze was harassed by demands for reinforcements from the various arrondissements and from several officers; each arrondissement considered itself the most important, each delegate or group of delegates in their own eyes were the most capable. Their requests could not be complied with; all the federates which Delescluze had to dispose of were sent to the western front; these were only a few battalions. The news of the Versaillais' entry was not yet generally known. Acting upon false information received from the Arc de Triomphe, Delescluze had contradicted the alleged entry, and, between the affirmation and the denial, the latter was more generally believed, as being more congenial to the federates' wishes.

It was not so in the western portion of Paris. There the Versaillais soldiers had been seen, heard, felt; and the affrighted federates, taken by surprise, rushed away from the Trocadero and La Muette, some across the river, others to the Tuileries Palace, trailing their cannons and accompanied by all their equipages, commissariat and attendants, spreading alarm wherever they went, and crying Treason and Betrayal. Of those who crossed the river were the federates who at the barricade on the Quai de Passy had seized Ducatel. Him they took to the Military School below the Champs de Mars. The alarm had already reached there, the place was in confusion, departure preparations were in swift progress; nevertheless, the officer in

command, an Italian named Razoua, formed a Court-Martial, and Ducatel was by it promptly condemned to death. The sentence was not, however, immediately executed, the eagerness to vacate a place in such unpleasant proximity to the Versaillais overriding all other considerations.

SECOND DAY: MONDAY, MAY 22ND, 1871.

AT two o'clock in the morning the Versailles army had obtained entrance into Paris by the four gateways contiguous to the north-western side of the river. It was necessary to open a way on the southern side to admit troops appertaining to General de Cissey's corps, which were drawn up outside the gates of Sèvres and Versailles. A brigade of General Vinoy's army, itself just entered, was despatched across the railway bridge of Auteuil with mission to open the Sèvres entrance. On its way it encountered some resistance at the south side of the river, but the federates braved the attack made upon them for only a few minutes, and then rushed away up the Quai de Javel. Vinoy's men marched on and arrived at their destination just as a passage from the exterior had been effected by engineers of De Cissey's troops, who had made a narrow stairway or ladder of timbers, over which, in single file, the fortifications could be crossed. A company of these engineers, having surmounted this obstacle, launched themselves on to the railway and established themselves there before even an alarm had been sounded. The fortifications at this point also seemed to be deserted by federates, who had been unable either to endure or to reduce the bombardment which the place had been subjected to from Fort Issy and elsewhere.

De Cissey's troops marched forward into Grenelle, after having opened the Porte Versailles. Marshal Macmahon formed his headquarters at the Trocadero, and, whilst the troops that had been on their feet all night took a brief rest, he arranged a plan of operations and informed each general of his respective share therein. The leading idea was to gradually force back the federates from the external positions of the city into the central, and from the centre to the east, by which means the fighting area would be compressed and the Com-

munists surrounded. Thus, General Ladmirault was ordered to proceed along the line of the fortifications on the north side, whilst Generals Douay and Clinchant should expand into the interior parallel with him. A precisely analogous proceeding on the south side could not be adopted, owing to the forts of Montrouge, Bicêtre, and Issy being still in Communist hands. However, Generals de Cissey and Vinoy were to advance to the Champ de Mars and the Hôtel des Invalides and to seize the Montparnasse Station "if possible"; it would therefore be essential to follow the southern fortifications to a point beyond that already occupied.[1] The three federate forts in this locality were laid under investment by detachments of De Cissey's corps, which had been left for that purpose in their positions outside the city.

Macmahon knew well what were the Communists' principal strongholds, viz., Montmartre, Place Vendôme, Tuileries, and Hôtel de Ville, yet he did not intend attacking any of them this day, though they were all within a couple of miles distance and he had fully fifty thousand men at command, with large reinforcements close behind. There were numerous barricades in the way—viewing from the Trocadero, there appeared to be barricades in every direction—they would take time to surmount; Macmahon, moreover, wished to drive the federates before him, and not to leave any at his back, whilst, lastly, though unavowed, he had become infected with Thiers' supreme cautiousness. Better a slow advance and sure, than a brilliant onset and run even a slight risk of disaster. We will not take this Communal bull by the horns—we will attack him first in the flanks and wound him there, then his head will be less dangerous and easier vanquished.

Before six o'clock the troops were in motion again. Presently the thundering boom of cannon and the arrival of projectiles in the neighbourhood of the Trocadero and Quai de Billy showed that the federates from their batteries on Montmartre and the Place de la Concorde had set to work to repel their enemy. The impression thus produced was intensified before long. Two places of importance to the federates were

[1] Macmahon, p. 18.

taken with ease, but they formed about the last of which this could be said. These were the Arc de Triomphe, where the federates took flight upon the Versaillais' approach, running the length of the Champs Elysées as fast as they could, trailing their guns—and the Military School, which the men of De Cissey's corps found unoccupied, the federates having evacuated it about two hours before, leaving for their successors an immense quantity of provisions and ammunition, and 200 cannons. Razoua, the federate officer at this place, thought not of contesting elsewhere the Versailles army, with which, in fact, he also had had some underhand dealings—he went home, changed his attire, and escaped. Ducatel, sentenced to death, was left alone when the federates made off, and he had emerged from his prison house through a window before the Government troops arrived. A brigade of General Vinoy's corps took several barricades in Grenelle, and then, marching along the quays, seized the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—from which the Communal delegate Paschal Grousset was discreetly absent—and the palace of the Corps Legislatif.

Another division of De Cissey's, starting from the Porte de Versailles, attacked first the Jesuitical College close at hand, where strong barricades had been erected, and then proceeded to the mairie of the 15th arrondissement, in Rue Lecourbe, where also were barricades. Both of these places were stubbornly defended by the federates, but without avail. In Rue Lecourbe two men were shot down who were not combatants, but because they had National Guard pantaloons on.[1]

Other portions of De Cissey's corps traversed the line of the southern fortifications as far as Porte de Vanves, which they opened, and they also took a barricade fortified by artillery which they found at the intersection of the two railways at this point. A regiment headed by Colonel Boulanger—a man destined in later years to achieve a renown beyond his powers to sustain—established itself on the railway behind the Montparnasse Station, whilst in the evening the station itself was seized and fortified by another brigade which had advanced by the Rue and Boulevard Vaugirard. This, with the occupation

[1] Larousse.

of the Hôtel des Invalides, completed the day's operations on the south side of the Seine, giving to the attacking army an occupied area which stretched from the river near the bridge De la Concorde, almost in a straight line to the Porte de Vanves.[1]

On the north side of the river similar successes attended the Versaillais. The line of fortifications as far as Porte d'Asnieres fell into their hands, and among the important places or strong barricades which they took during the day were the Parc Monceau, the Pépinière barracks, the Chaptal College, the Place de l'Europe, the station St. Lazare ; the Palais de l'Industrie and the Palais de l'Elysée in the Champs Elysées, at the two last-named places installing on the roofs sharpshooters, who directed a damaging fire upon the federate artillerymen in the Place de la Concorde and the Tuileries palace. The moderate programme which Macmahon had laid out for the day's operations was realized to the full : slowly, yet surely, he was reconquering Paris. The western portion of the city was already freed from federates—except such as were prisoners, of whom there were several thousands. The Mayor of Passy reoccupied his mairie, and the Prefect of the Seine, Jules Ferry, also took up his abode and functions there for the time being.[2]

Passy, the centre of the loyal National Guards, was now the scene of their emergence into activity after a long period of silent discontent and concealment. Despite the discovery and confiscation of the tricoloured armlets, there were numbers of these signs of loyalty exhibited on the arms of National Guards, and everywhere the loyalists were full of hope and courage now that the Versailles army was in their midst. In the 7th arrondissement, not far from the Hôtel des Invalides and other places to which the Versaillais had reached, a few score of National Guards, hastily gathered together by one Colonel Durouchoux, kept at bay a much greater number of federates the whole day, notwithstanding that they were yet surrounded by the Communists. Durouchoux received a shot in the neck which proved fatal. Not until half-past seven at night were his men reinforced by some scouts of the regular army.[3]

[1] Macmahon, p. 20.

[2] Daudet, p. 51.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 53–56.

The demeanour of the Versailles troops entered into Paris was excellent. They were mostly young men, but were characterized by an unusual gravity, as if their business was distasteful to them. After enduring the hardships of a severe winter campaign, and, many of them, a humiliating imprisonment in Germany, all saddened with the knowledge that their efforts had been useless to preserve France from a terrible defeat, it was surely the extreme of bitterness to be requisitioned into fighting their own countrymen in their own beloved capital. There was, however, not the least trace of reluctance to obey orders, but, on the contrary, there were exemplary obedience, and considerable spirit and dash in attacking. The evil effects of hesitation or of tampering with the strictest ideal of duty was now borne in upon the soldier's mind as well as in that of his superior, and there was consequently perceptible only a steady, unflinching, and inflexible purpose, to have done with this Communist business as fast as ever orders would permit. The troops already in Paris had had very little rest for thirty-six hours, and they doubtless were, at the close of this day, exhausted and weary. But only the half of the Versailles army had entered the city; the other half, unfatigued, might have been quickly brought forward, and the contest prosecuted without a moment's cessation. The vigour and intrepidity which had been already displayed by the troops would have warranted the commander-in-chief in pushing ahead with greater brilliancy and rapidity of movement than he chose to adopt.

On the Communal side this had been a day of turmoil, feverish activity, and despairing effort. From two o'clock in the morning, the church bells had sounded an alarm, the drums had beat the call to arms, couriers were galloping along the streets conveying orders or seeking information, flying masses of fugitive federates were coming in from the west and south-west cursing and angry—other bodies of federates were forming into array and being moved from one part to another, some to barricades to meet the Versaillais, and some to central and eastern positions, where it was determined to make a strenuous defence. The first surprise and the cowardly flights were things of the past—there was a hatred in the federates' breasts that spurred them on to fight, and, resistance once decided upon,

they were eager for the fray. These reactionist Versaillais—these monarchical, clerical, imperialist oppressors, these assassins and autocrats, military despots and political liars, who wish to crush the Commune and the Republic in order to re-erect a plutocratic and bourgeoisie government by which the rights of the people will be trampled on, and the people themselves shot down like vermin—these are they whom we federates detest with an ungovernable rage, and whom we shall slay without mercy. It was essentially a passionate and not a reasoned antipathy. The Communal members and journals had never appealed to nor given examples of calmness or juridical fairness, and the untempered emotions and hot-headed harangues which had been put before the ignorant and well-meaning but sadly misled federates were imprinted with the stamp of truth upon their feebler intelligences.

At daybreak the members of the Commune on horseback went the rounds of their respective arrondissements, incited the federates to raise barricades at every point of vantage, and imparted to them their own animation and enthusiasm. Barricades, like mushrooms, sprang up in all directions in a few hours. The four corners of intersecting streets were the positions mostly chosen for them, and every conceivable article was utilised in their construction—paving-stones, sacks of earth, bales of cloth, household furnishings, bedding, carriages, carts, trees—any and everything that was at hand. Women and children vied with the men in activity and resourcefulness; passers-by were compelled to work for a quarter or half an hour at the structures before being allowed to go on their way, and shops and warehouses were called upon remorselessly to provide out of their stores materials wherewith to raise these improvised works of defence, the erection of which slackened not even when Versaillais shells and gunshots fell about in dangerous proximity.

At six o'clock, as already stated, the booming of cannon from the heights of Montmartre and from the Place de la Concorde added a thunder-roar to the clanging of bells and the roll of drums. Then in a short while the street fighting began, and the sharp crackle of musket shots joined its resonance to the *mêlée* of sound. The federates, as we know, were uniformly unsuccessful in maintaining their positions. One after another,

barricades were taken or turned; the possibility of the latter operation evidently having not entered into the calculations of the federates, for they were invariably surprised by it. Prisoners were made most often at the turned barricades; all were sent under escort to Passy, and thence to Versailles. At the barricades taken by direct movement there were more numerous dead and wounded. The federate loss was heavy; the streets where fighting had occurred were strewn with bodies, to bury or remove which there was no serious attempt made. The defenders of the city fought bravely and tenaciously. It is affirmed on various sides that they were well primed with drink before being sent off to the encounter; it is beyond doubt that wine and brandy were commodities freely obtained and freely used by the federates. But that these fighting men were drunk in any degree cannot be believed, for it is not consonant with the determined resistance which they offered nor with the casualties they inflicted on their opponents. The federates also were French, and it must not for even an instant be supposed that the Versaillais alone were courageous and the Communists wholly cowardly. The latter army certainly contained cowards, but these took care to keep in the interior of the town away from the fighting. Those who faced the foe were the best elements out of an admittedly heterogeneous force, and were not devoid of those soldier-like qualities which in past ages had raised the military renown of France to the highest altitude; what they lacked mostly was outside of themselves—capable officering and generalship. Left to do battle mainly on the principle of individual enterprise, unschooled in discipline and the arts of war, incoherent and scattered units by fault of their leaders, it is a matter for wonder that, being attacked by a force of men of which none of these things could be said, they retarded its advance at all rather than that they were with difficulty beaten.

A proclamation drawn up by Delescluze the previous evening, published in the *Journal Officiel* and placarded over the town this morning, fanned the flame of federate fury against the Versaillais, and transformed their irresolution into fixity of purpose. It was a spirited exhortation:—". . . Place to the people, to the combatants, to the bare arms. . . . Citi-

zens, your representatives will fight and die with you, if it be necessary, but in the name of that glorious France, mother of all popular revolutions, permanent home of the ideas of Justice and of Solidarity which must and will be the laws of the world, —march to the enemy and let your revolutionary energy show him that Paris may be sold,[1] but can neither be delivered nor vanquished." This appeal to arms was countersigned by the Committee of Public Safety, which body and Delescluze sat at the Hôtel de Ville in permanence.

Other proclamations and appeals were issued during the day, both by the various governing bodies located in the Hôtel de Ville, by many of the Communal members from the mairies of their several arrondissements, and by the few journals which owed their continued existence to their inflammatory articles. Nearly all these documents were of a passionate virulence, packed with misrepresentation, and declarative of a determination to conquer the Versaillais in too frantic a manner to be accepted as indicative of anything but bravado. Deeply rooted purposes bind the tongue to deliberate speech; it is only the semblance of conviction which can masquerade in a febrile volubility.

Of more practical account was the appearance of Brunel at the head of 6,000 federates to defend the Place de la Concorde.[2] This position was occupied at about ten o'clock in the morning, and from that time the artillery stationed there boomed replies to the batteries erected by the Versaillais at the Arc de Triomphe. A shell from the latter burst on the Ministry of Finances and set it on fire, but Jourde, assisted by firemen, was able to extinguish the flames before much damage had been done. After this was accomplished, Jourde also repaired to the Hôtel de Ville and took up his quarters there. He this day received from the Bank another 500,000 francs, wherewith to pay the federates.

At the Hôtel de Ville, as elsewhere, were barricades and trenches, which, with numerous artillery and battalions of federates, gave the impression of a fort rather than of a municipal

[1] A reference to the heavy indemnity exacted by Germany at the close of the war.

[2] Du Camp, t. iii. p. 76.

palace. Throughout the day, inside and outside the building, there was incessant commotion, going to and fro of couriers, of federates, and of women, seeking and conveying orders or ammunition, of which latter there were large stores at the Hôtel. It was a motley and disorderly paraphernalia.

Early in the morning an unknown man, charged with being a spy, was brought to the Hôtel de Ville by a federate named Louis Imbert, accompanied by a vociferating and menacing crowd. This man had been arrested near the Military School before the Versailles army had arrived there; on the way to the Hôtel de Ville he was beaten and otherwise molested by the excited people. He was taken inside the Hôtel de Ville—the proceedings there remain a mystery, but after a quarter of an hour's detention the man was rebrought to the open air, placed against a tree in the avenue which faces the main entrance to the Hôtel, and there shot.[1] It was a sign that the Communist populace had eschewed half-measures; just or unjust, they were terrible in their hatred of things Versaillais.

The members of the Commune re-assembled in the forenoon at the Hôtel de Ville. Félix Pyat, anxious for his personal safety, wished to negotiate with the enemy; he found none to support his proposal, nor even to notice it.[2] The members were preoccupied and perturbed—usually too prolific with words, speech seemed on this solitary occasion to have left them. A general understanding that the Committee of Public Safety should have full powers to carry on the defence was arrived at, then the members separated as on the previous night, each to his own arrondissement, without any effort having been made to combine their resistive action.[3] Many of them felt with Pyat that resistance was hopeless, yet they dared not avow it—had they not for two months opposed concession and submission, glorified the Commune, flattered the federates, condemned and needlessly angered the Versaillais, whereof the only logical outcome was now arrived? Were not already thousands of federates either prisoners, wounded, or killed, as a result of believing their leaders' alluring promises, and trusting

[1] 3me Conseil de Guerre, *procès* Louis Imbert. Du Camp, t. iv. p. 153.
[2] *La Vérité*, p. 402. [3] *Ibid.*

in their sincerity? For these leaders now to avow the hopelessness of their cause just at the moment when their personal safety became jeopardised, would be to condemn themselves in the eyes of their *protégés* and dupes, who might turn against and rend them. Escape from their dilemma was not easy; it was impossible to leave Paris as fugitives, owing to the German authorities refusing to allow such persons to pass the lines occupied by them. Ordinary means of exit from the city were wholly stopped, and there was no other course available to them but to take part in the struggle now going on, to openly counsel resistance, whilst secretly preparing for concealment or flight at the first favourable opportunity. These eventualities had not been unforeseen by the majority of the Communal and Comité Central members—false passports and papers of identity, disguises and hiding-places, had been secured, even before the Versaillais entry into the city, so as to facilitate their escape at the final hour.

It was in keeping with the character of such people that, though extremely punctilious for their own safety, they should be regardless of the means by which it was maintained. Bergeret, Eudes, and Urbain had not scrupled to abstract and secrete for their private use linen, plate, jewels, and other valuables which they found in the various Government offices and establishments to which they had been delegated. Eudes, feeling the end of his tenure of power to be nigh, was assiduous this 22nd May in furtherance of the same exploitation of property. Eudes and Bergeret again, and Rigault, Ferré, Cournet, had lived sumptuously, and far in excess of the moderate pay which the Commune had allowed to each of its members; the three last-named, having authority over the Prison Depôt near the Prefecture of Police, even requisitioned the female prisoners to serve their purposes at nights, returning them to the Depôt in the mornings.[1] Examples such as these were not without emulants of a lower rank; the Communal decree of Death to the Thieves, the complaints of Jourde as to the heavy increase of expenditure, and of Varlin as to the multiplicity of unauthorized "requisitions," prove unmistakably the existence of an extensive

[1] Du Camp, t. i. pp. 52, 86; t. ii. pp. 106, 107; t. iv. p. 48.

system of pillage and pilfering for personal usages, even were outside testimony wanting—which is not the case.

All these things, however, sad and serious though they be, pale into insignificance before the gravity of other charges which weigh upon the members of the Commune.

These men, whose ideas of government were the most primitive, whose warlike notions were not above those of the lowest races of mankind, who comprehended not the virtue of strategy, having not the skill wherewith to contrive it, who had precipitated and continued a struggle which had been a series of defeats, the vicissitudes of which offered not one hope of eventual victory—these men had determined and had already taken steps to revenge themselves for that final defeat which was sure to come. Paris could not be held—then Paris would be burnt or blown up! From time to time threats and rumours had pointed to such an intention on the part of the Communists, but the idea was so gigantically abhorrent that few people believed the reports. Nevertheless, they were substantially true. Parisel and his Scientific Delegation had been engaged in the investigation of explosive compounds, both for this purpose and for the ordinary operations of war, but Scientists and Science had refused to open out their secrets for the furtherance of such an immense malignity, and the explosive idea was perforce abandoned. There remained, however, petroleum and powder. Large quantities of these materials had been stored at the Palace of the Legion of Honour, at which place Eudes presided; at the Hôtel de Ville, where Pindy was governor; at the Palace of the Tuileries, inhabited by Bergeret; at the Church of Nôtre Dame des Victoires, the invasion and plunder of which on the 17th May has been recorded; whilst at the Prefecture of Police, where Ferré and Rigault reigned supreme, powder, cartridges, and petroleum sufficient for its destruction were obtained and placed in the cellars this day[1] (22nd). All was ready for the incendiarism—only the signal waited for; even this could be dispensed with if the Versaillais approached unexpectedly, for the federates who were employed in moving and storing these highly inflammable materials knew perfectly well the object

[1] Du Camp, t. iv. p. 235.

which was in view. They recoiled not from such perfidious business, but were ardent in its promotion. The intense hatred of the Versaillais had given birth to a spirit of destruction which was as boundless as its progenitor was unqualified. All that the Versaillais love—all this beautiful Paris, shall not be theirs, if it cannot be ours. Speed, ye Versaillais, if ye would save your idolised city from a frightful calamity!

That fanatical hatred, mother of an inane destructiveness, which had already been productive of the demolition of Thiers' house and of the Vendôme column, now spilt its venom upon human life, in a way indicative of the virulence of the passion and the absence of that self-control which is the great feature of civilization. In a street which the Versaillais had during the morning passed through and searched, a federate soldier had managed to conceal himself and to evade discovery. For him, danger was practically over—notwithstanding which, having a gun in his hand, he could not forbear using it and he deliberately shot a twelve-year-old boy—a member of a Neuilly family which had refuged there—who innocently played on the opposite side of the street. Seized and taken before an officer of the Versailles army at the Chaptal College, the federate's only reason for his action was that the child played with a hoop, which irritated him. The officer said to him, "You are mad," whereupon the federate slapped his face and the next instant received his own death shot.[1]

Near the Palace of the Legion of Honour, Mégy, once commander of Fort Issy, friend and follower of Eudes, whose orders to commence burning operations he even then awaited, excited, by his extravagant and plundering conduct in the mansion of the Comte de Chabrol, the ire of the latter's *concierge*, a man named Thomé, who had remained in charge of the dwelling. The indignation of the *concierge* at last burst the bonds of discretion, and, among other things, he stigmatised Mégy as a stupid workman. Mégy straightway called a federate named Decamp, who without ado seized the unfortunate Thomé, placed him against a wall and shot him.[2]

At the Tuileries, as elsewhere, there was grand commotion

[1] Du Camp, t. ii. pp. 390–392.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 126.

relative to the erection of barricades. Some *gamins*, full of excitement, threw themselves heart and soul into this unusual occupation. Up the Rue Richelieu there was a house undergoing repair, with scaffolding in front. Thither ran these boys to carry off the timber for their barricade. One M. Koch, a chemist in that street, from his doorway witnessed the arbitrary proceeding and, as an honest citizen, resented it and threatened to box the boys' ears if they did not make off. The boys went off, grumbling. Presently a band of federates arrived and arrested M. Koch, not before he had in self-defence brandished an empty flagon before them, which flagon, it was immediately said, contained sulphuric acid or some other deadly compound which the chemist had intended to use against them. Away to the Hôtel de Ville with him—let him be judged by the Committee of Public Safety! The chemist, surrounded by an ever-increasing crowd which insulted and molested him and menaced the advent of even a worse contingency, was taken bareheaded to the municipal palace, into the presence of Gabriel Ranvier, one of the Committee of Public Safety, and of two members of the Commune whose names have not transpired. There the bruised and beaten prisoner, palpitating, almost bereft of his senses, could only reiterate, "There was nothing in the flagon,"—a defence too simple and brief for his pitiless judges and unrelenting accusers. The hapless man was given over to the federates, to be shot in the cellar of the Hôtel de Ville. Being unacquainted with the palace, they could not find the cellar, and dared not shoot him in the courtyard by reason of the ammunition stored there. "Back to the Tuileries!" is shouted out, and away they go, an angry, vociferating, and disorderly crowd, with their victim in their midst. On the way, three men in the street call out to them not to strike the unfortunate man—these three, one in frock coat and the other two in workmen's blouses, are instantly seized and joined as prisoners to M. Koch. Arrived at the Tuileries again, a court-martial is formed by Urbain, Bergeret, a federate captain named Etienne Boudin, and others, before which tribunal the four prisoners are brought. The names of the three new ones are unknown, but the crowd had invented charges against them and their identity is of no import—it is sufficient to allege that he in frock coat is a disguised priest, they in

blouses secret police emissaries, and to reaffirm the charge against M. Koch. What other evidence could be needed than this overwhelming concatenation of tongues, male, female, infantile? Rather, it is impossible to do other than condemn, because this excited populace demands condemnation. Condemned, the four prisoners are. Etienne Boudin forms an execution party in the courtyard, places his prisoners against the wall, forces the two supposed spies to kneel, disregards the cries of Mercy and Pardon, of appeals for wives' and children's sake which the four men utter in their last despair, angrily turns upon some of his soldiers who wish to save the condemned ones, commands the executioners to fire—and then, after this quadruple murder is, by an irregular fusillade, accomplished, cries out, "Vive la Commune!" From the balcony of the Marshals' Hall, Bergeret, Urbain and others view the whole scene; from this balcony also there comes a cry of "Vive la Commune!"[1] As in the lamentable case of Generals Thomas and Lecomte, so in this, so far as M. Koch is concerned—an order from Delescluze arrives, when it is too late, for the chemist to be restored to liberty. The people's idea of justice is a swift, terrible and irrevocable judgment: save us from the people! Better the law's delays than such promptitude.

At about the same hour of the evening—six—another quasi-judicial execution took place not far from the Tuileries. A supposed spy named Valliot had been arrested, arms in hand, by some of the Avengers of Flourens, and consigned to the Depôt adjoining the Palace of Justice until the sanction of Ferré could be obtained for his execution. That sanction was soon forthcoming, and Valliot was taken from the Depôt on to the Quai de l'Horologe and there shot.[2]

Ferré, as head of the Police and of the prisons, and Rigault, as Public Prosecutor with an especial animus against ecclesiasticism, had been revolving in their brains what it were best to do with the hostages held by the Commune. The chief of these had been detained in Mazas prison—a strong and extensive structure—until the preceding Friday, when an exception was

[1] 3me Conseil de Guerre, 28th August, 1871. Du Camp, t. ii. pp. 190–198. *Rapport d'ensemble*, p. 151.

[2] Du Camp, t. i. pp. 94, 95.

made by the removal of Chaudey, the journalist and barrister, to the prison of Ste. Pélagie. This was done in response to the earnest solicitations of Chaudey's wife, who knew that at Ste. Pélagie her husband would receive better attention; she also thought that he would be more likely to regain his liberty from it than from Mazas, the former prison being more open, less formidable, and known to be utilised only for prisoners undergoing short sentences.

Chaudey, then, for the present is apparently in less danger. Not so with the priests. Raoul Rigault has obtained an order from the Committee of Public Safety—signed by Ranvier, Eudes, and Gambon—for the removal of all hostages of importance from Mazas to the prison La Roquette. This prison was situated further to the eastward, and was the usual abode of prisoners condemned to death.

Before this order was carried out, Rigault received a visit from the president of the Parisian barristers, M. Rousse, who came to solicit at the hands of the fierce and powerful Prosecutor a permission to see in their prison the Archbishop of Paris, the Abbé Deguerry, and the Père Caubert. Rigault accosted his visitor, whom he did not know, at first with marked sternness; when, however, M. Rousse declared his identity, the Communist chief suddenly altered his manner to one of familiarity and affability. The permission sought was granted, and M. Rousse seized the opportunity to gain some information. "How many priests have you arrested?" he asked; to which Rigault replied, mixing strangely falsehood with truth, "I know nothing of it, but not enough. If people had listened to me, they would *all be in prison.*" Rigault subsequently said that the priests were in no immediate danger, at which M. Rousse remarked that perhaps an interpellation from Urbain—the member who in the Communal *séance* of the 17th May had demanded the execution of ten hostages—might force his hand. To this Rigault replied contemptuously: "I fear not Urbain's interpellations; I fear not any *interpellation.* The affair will come on only when you give me the tip" (*vous me ferez signe*).[1] Ah, thought M. Rousse, you will wait a long while ere I give you a signal to expedite

[1] Rousse, p. 33. Forni, p. 102.

the trial of the hostages. M. Rousse departed, and made his visit to Mazas, where he saw the three hostages whom he had requested permission to visit.

Later in the day Rigault, accompanied by his assistant, Gaston Dacosta, also visited Mazas, and showed the governor of the prison, Garreau, the order for the transference of hostages to La Roquette. From the prison register these three officials drew up a list of the hostages which could be denominated "important." First on the list was the Archbishop Darboy, then M. Bonjean, a president of the Court of Cassation; the banker, Jecker, was seventh, the Abbé Deguerry was ninth; in all fifty-four names were writ, of which thirty-eight were priests, and the remainder described as secret agents or police officers. At nine o'clock at night two large carts were brought to the prison, and in these vehicles forty out of the fifty-four selected hostages were conveyed under escort to La Roquette. The remaining fourteen were left at Mazas for the time being, cartage accommodation for them having been unprocurable.[1]

The prison of La Roquette had been reinforced in the morning by the arrival of six companies of federates, under the command of a Captain Verig. The governor of this prison was named François; he had been appointed to the position through the agency of a brother of Ranvier. A crowd had assembled to greet with threats and maledictions the forty unhappy men, as the lumbering carts drew up in the courtyard of the prison. With scant formalities, the prisoners were taken charge of by François, Verig and some of the principal officers of the prison, amongst whom were two named Mounier and Ramain. They were enclosed separately in cells, the furnishings of which were more meagre than was customary; thrust in in the dark, it was not until daybreak that they could examine their narrow apartments. When some of the hostages asked to be supplied with a chair, Ramain cynically responded that it was not worth troubling about for the short time they would be there.[2]

At the prison of La Santé, situated in the south-eastern portion of Paris, there were 147 hostages, mostly gendarmes and police agents, but including also some priests. Caullet,

[1] Du Camp, t. i. pp. 248–254. [2] *Ibid.*

the prison governor, though of course a Communist, was different to the governors of Mazas and Roquette. He was anxious to save the hostages that were under his care from the malevolence of his superiors. In the early morning of this day a large quantity of powder and war ammunition had been brought to him to be stored in the cellars of the prison; it would have endangered the lives of the hostages, and Caullet refused to receive it. Later in the day an order came from Ferré by which the governor was commanded to shoot all the gendarmes, sergents de ville, and "secret Bonapartist agents," if the Versaillais should have the audacity to attack the prison. Caullet gave an acknowledgment for the order without remark, but nevertheless resolved to disregard it. Late at night Sérizier, who was chief of legion of the quarter where La Santé stood, entered the prison, and demanded if Ferré's order had been carried out. No: the order was conditional, the condition was not yet arrived. Further satisfaction than this Sérizier could not obtain, and he departed, full of anger and venom.[1]

At about the same hour, in the opposite part of Paris (Montmartre), Lefrançais and Alphonse Humbert, one of the editors of the *Père Duchêne*, came upon Cluseret, who had been given a command, under General La Cecilia, in that neighbourhood. The two civilians proposed to accompany Cluseret, but the latter seized a favourable moment and escaped from them and from further participation in the Communal embroglio. His hiding-place was not far from the spot where Lefrançais and Humbert last saw him.[2]

At Versailles, the National Assembly, moved to enthusiasm by the successful entry into Paris, declared by acclamation that their troops and the Chief of the Executive Power—M. Thiers—deserved well of the country. The army—yes, for it was now reliable, obedient, and energetic; but Thiers' eulogy cannot be said in a word. The National Assembly, characteristically French, was hasty; had it waited two or three days, other feelings than those of success and laudation would have stifled its acclamation, and superseded its sense of gratitude to its chief.

[1] 6me Conseil de Guerre, Feb. 8th, 1872. Du Camp, t. i. pp. 202, 203.

[2] Lefrançais, pp. 320, 321.

THIRD DAY: TUESDAY, MAY 23RD, 1871.

DURING the dark hours of the night which separated Monday from Tuesday, the operations of the war were suspended. Both combatants needed rest. Wounded federates lay in palaces and houses never meant for hospitals; camp fires were lit, around which the Communists talked and dozed; women of a class were not wanting, and these, even in this dread hour, infused some gaiety into the minds of their wearied and perturbed friends.

The chief aim of the Versaillais attack in the morning was to be Montmartre. To this stronghold of the Communists Dombrowski had withdrawn his men; here also was La Cecilia. On the hill there were scores of cannons; beneath it, on the Place St. Pierre, was an enormous barricade strongly fortified; the boulevards Clichy, Rochechouart, and Ornano, which bounded it on the south and east, were hemmed in with barricades and defences. It was a position easy to defend—most difficult to take. The cannons on the brow of the hill formed the greatest obstacle—they nearly all pointed towards the interior of Paris, from which direction the Communists thought the attack would come, and towards which the cannons had the previous day belched forth their fury on to the quarters occupied by the Versaillais.

At four o'clock, the attacking forces were on the move. One division—Grenier—of the 1st Army Corps, General Ladmirault, took the route of the fortifications as far as the railway goods station near La Chapelle, taking barricades and freeing entrances on its way; then turning sharply to the right, it traversed the Rue Poissonniers as far as Rue Mercadet, where numerous barricades blocked the way.[1] Fierce encounters took place betwixt Communist and Versaillais—at one of these, occurring at the

[1] Macmahon, p. 21.

corner of Rue Myrrha and the Boulevard Ornano, Dombrowski received a wound in his stomach which speedily caused his death. He had been twice previously wounded. Whether the fatal wound came from the Versaillais, or from the Communists themselves, will perhaps never be definitely known.[1] It is, however, certain that Dombrowski, shortly before receiving his death-wound, had been accused of treason by his men, and had been practically deserted by them.[2] This is admitted by Vermorel, who was along with Dombrowski, in the funeral oration which, the next day, he came to deliver over his friend.[3] That Dombrowski was a traitor to the Communist cause there can be little doubt; but his treachery was of a humane character, dictated by a consciousness that stubborn resistance could not alter the inevitable final defeat, and would but increase the number of dead and wounded. The particular treachery charged against him by his men appears to have been his failure to pay over to them certain sums of money which he had promised, this failure being of course owing to the imprisonment of Georges Veysset, already recorded. Distrust, deceit, treason—here at Montmartre, and elsewhere in the Communist ranks. Never was there a cause professing so wide a brotherhood, with so little mutual confidence.

A brigade—Pradier—of the Grenier division branched off from the main body along the Rue Mercadet, and advanced slowly under a plunging fire from the heights, to the cemetery of Montmartre, which it entered. Another division—Laveaucoupet—also marched along the fortifications as far as the Rue Mont-Cenis, up which it went, dividing into the Rue des Saules, and thus approaching the hill.

The fifth army corps—General Clinchant—attacked Montmartre from the south. An immense barricade at the Place de Clichy, which had withstood a simple fusillade the whole of the previous day, was now brought low by a piece of artillery, and taken. The mairies of the 17th and 18th arrondissements were also possessed.

The hill of Montmartre was now surrounded by the Government forces. The federates, fighting furiously and savagely,

[1] Du Camp, t. i. p. 91. [2] *Ibid.* [3] Daudet, p. 137.

were alternately beaten and beating; losing a barricade, then retaking it, and again losing it—driven eventually from the main boulevards into the minor streets, refuging in and fighting from the houses, whilst their foe steadily and even angrily pursued and closed in upon them, dislodging them from their shelters, and leaving few loopholes for escape. The carnage was dreadful; quarter to a combatant was refused—there was no time to parley, no escort to be spared just then to look after prisoners. Nearly all the defenders of the barricades were killed, among them being not a few women, who had shared in the fighting.

Finally the Pradier Brigade, headed by volunteers of the loyal National Guards, got the lead up the hill, and was the first to arrive at the summit; soon to be followed by others. The red flag of the Commune which floated from the Moulin de la Galette was replaced at one o'clock by the tricolour flag of France, and announced to all who saw it that Montmartre, "the grand fortress of the Commune,"[1] was conquered. Over a hundred cannons and large quantities of war stores and ammunition fell into the victor's hands, and nearly 3,000 prisoners were taken, many of whom had changed their clothing in the hope of evading capture.

The federates who were able to escape from Montmartre flew to Belleville, another stronghold of Communism, and presently the artillery on the Buttes Chaumont fired across to the hill of Montmartre, but this fire was speedily replied to by the Versaillais and silenced. Elsewhere, however—notably from the cemetery of Père Lachaise—the Communists had free play for their guns, which they directed on those parts or buildings of Paris that were occupied by their enemy.

Other parts of the city than Montmartre were attacked by other forces. General Douay's troops, expanding further into the centre, took several barricades up to the Rue de la Fayette (lower portion), and the church of Nôtre Dame de Lorette. The mairie of the 9th arrondissement and the Grand Opera House also fell into his hands with comparative ease. Not so the Rue Royale and the Place de la Madeleine, which Douay's

[1] Macmahon, p. 22.

right wing attacked. Here the federates were in strong force. A formidable barricade across the top of the Rue Royale faced the beautiful church of La Madeleine; at the bottom of the street were the Ministry of Marine and the defences of the Place de la Concorde. In the Ministry Brunel had his head-quarters, and it was also used as a hospital for the wounded.

General Douay divided his troops for this attack into two portions, one to arrive at the Place de la Madeleine by a north route, and the other by a south. The former experienced much difficulty in carrying out its instructions, and several severe encounters with the federates delayed its progress; the latter, finding it imprudent to follow the open street, crossed gardens and houses of the Faubourg St. Honoré in order to arrive at the Rue Royale and upwards to La Madeleine.

The day advanced; the firing of artillery and small arms was incessant: Brunel and his battalions heard it and were disquieted. The crackling noise approached. About three in the afternoon a few Versailles soldiers fired from the windows of a house in the Place de la Madeleine down the Rue Royale. The fire was returned by the fédérates from behind their barricade, and an exchange of shots continued for some time. The Versailles troops increased in number; they were also drawing near by the Faubourg St. Honoré, and Brunel, fearing his retreat would be cut off from behind, ordered the Rue Royale to be burnt, for which contingency provision had been made. Petroleum was stored in the Ministry of Marine, and a further supply was even then on the way thereto. This inflammable oil was served out in buckets, cans, and other utensils to the federates; it was spilt over doors and windows, down cellars and inside the houses—and set fire to. Three women, who had caroused in that vicinity since the preceding day, in a frenzy of exaltation, took the lead in the nefarious business. Two cannons in the Place de la Concorde were turned from pointing up the Champs Elysées to the Rue Royale; they were charged with inflammable matter and fired upon the doomed houses, the quicker to expedite their destruction. Fire pumps were also requisitioned to pump petroleum on to the upper floors, but these apparatus did not work satisfactorily. Before setting fire to a certain wine merchant's establishment the federates were careful to extract

the wine stored therein; it was removed to the Ministry of Marine for consumption at greater leisure. The porters, concierges, and tenants of the Rue Royale—far short of the full number normally appertaining to the street—rushed about distracted, and some few who, uncontrollable in their emotion, ventured to withstand the incendiarists, were either shot down or otherwise maltreated. In one of the condemned houses, seven persons who had refuged in the cellars to be out of the way of the fighting met even a worse death by fire. The street was ablaze; the federates shouted, "Vive la Commune!" Later in the evening they danced and imbibed their wine, indifferent to the miseries they had caused and to the fearful carnage of which Paris was the scene!

Meanwhile General Douay's troops have approached the Rue Royale by St. Honoré route, and are already at the top of the Place de la Madeleine. The federates found within these two points have no way of escape: they rush into the church of La Madeleine—is it they, the priest hunters, to seek sanctuary?—and barricade the doors. The Versaillais are after them undaunted, break open the doors and force their way in. Several hundreds of federates there are enclosed, but the Versaillais' ire is aroused, the resistance from their own countrymen has been too stubborn to permit mercy or any other magnanimous feeling finding a place in their excited minds, and they fall upon the refuged federates with vengeance and without pity. Nearly all are left dead or disabled on the church floor.[1]

The night was then come: Douay's troops, at least, were exhausted with their day's work, and further advance was out of the question, though just a stone's-throw off lay Brunel and his battalions, only the blazing Rue Royale being between.

The real strength of Brunel's position, however, lies in the artillery in the Place de la Concorde, which, commanding the Champs Elysées, effectually prevents any combined action on the part of the Government troops down that broad avenue. The proximity, however, of the Government forces renders Brunel dubious as to the advisability of remaining where he is—he sends to the Hôtel de Ville for instructions, and receives a

[1] De la Brugère, pp. 246–250. Du Camp, t. iii. pp. 82–86, 347. Daudet, p. 60. Macmahon, p. 23.

reply that he is to evacuate the Ministry of Marine and then *blow it up*. The order has the Committee of Public Safety stamp upon it—and Communal minds attach as much reliability to a simple stamp as to a written signature—it is incontestable. In the Ministry, however, there are 107 wounded men, many of them too grievously hurt to permit of their removal, and the surgeon attending them is not a federate, and is naturally anxious to save both the wounded and, if possible, the building from destruction. Brunel, also, is not inhuman, and he recoils from the idea of exploding a building which bears at this moment the sacred character of a hospital. Yet a sense of obedience somewhat singular in the man who was so openly insubordinate on January 27th, impelled him to endeavour to get the order of the Committee of Public Safety altered or cancelled, rather than straightway to disobey it. He sent again to the Hôtel de Ville for instructions, which, up to midnight, he had not received.[1]

On the south side of the Seine the Government troops advanced their positions with difficulty. Barricades appeared before them in every direction, and the fire from the Communist forts, which was directed on the Versaillais inside the city as well as on those outside, in many instances formed a serious impediment, and one which could not be directly encountered. In most of the engagements the fighting was severe and protracted. In only one case of any importance did the federates abandon their position ; this was at the Place St. Pierre (Petit Montrouge), where they were in danger of being surrounded. The results of the day's work were, however, uniformly in favour of the Versaillais, whose line of occupation, at night, stretched from the Rue du Bac, where it intersects with the Rue de l'Université, along the Rue de Grenelle, Rue de Rennes, Montparnasse station and cemetery, Avenue de Maine, and the fortifications as far as Porte d'Arcueil.

The complete and swift victory over Montmartre elated Thiers and caused him to overlook the really moderate extent of his army's achievements. He instantly sent out to the provinces a despatch containing the good news, and stating that

[1] Du Camp, t. iii. pp. 87, *et seq.*

if the struggle was not finished that day there was every likelihood of it being ended the morrow at latest. Yet at that moment not more than two-fifths of Paris had been conquered—at the same rate of progress it would take at least until Friday to repossess the whole city. Prophecy is a hazardous thing to indulge in publicly!

The advance of the Versaillais might have been more rapid than it was. The army possessed all solid and sterling qualities, but it lacked one of the utmost importance to make a campaign short: enterprise. The extreme cautiousness of Thiers and the refusal to court the least risk of a chance defeat, leavened the entire force in Paris, and contributed greatly to the comparative slowness of its action. In some cases barricades defended by a ridiculously small number of federates, kept the attacking party at bay for hours and even a day, when a dash forward would have at once revealed the meagreness of the defence and have secured the positions in a few minutes, and with less loss of life than was actually incurred. The slow advance gave time for the erection of barricades and indirectly strengthened the resistance—a swift sharp career through the centre of the town on the preceding day would have paralysed the federates, and averted many sad events. Instead of these dashing characteristics, there was an army exhibiting exemplary obedience, but neither asking nor being allowed any latitude—the experience of March 18th was too recent to permit of this. Both officers and men were strictly subordinated to the precise instructions given out by their superiors, even up to the generals and the commander-in-chief, who also was guided and limited by Thiers. Thiers alone, like a little god, obeyed his own impulses, which, though mainly right, were sometimes markedly wrong.

If the gain of Montmartre produced joy at Versailles, its loss caused a stupor of consternation amongst the Communist leaders. The news was carried by Vermorel on horseback to the Hôtel de Ville at a break-neck pace, though he had never ridden horse before.[1] The information he bore at once dazed and maddened the various authorities located in the municipal palace. Montmartre, their stronghold, taken! The cry of

[1] Lefrançais, p. 323.

Treason again rose to their lips, a parrot cry as ever, for they knew absolutely nothing of Dombrowski's questionable conduct and had no real warranty for thinking of treason. Delescluze, usually master of himself, strode to and fro in agitation, repeating in a broken voice, "Fire, fire, fire everywhere!"[1] Placards were printed and posted throughout those portions of the city still under their control, appealing to the soldiers of the Versailles army to desert, in repetition of their conduct on March 18th; but the day of desertions was past, save amongst the Communists themselves, many of whom foresaw the inevitable defeat and disappeared from the scene as soon as they could do so unnoticed. Another placard was similarly posted, commanding all window blinds and shutters to remain open and declaring that any house from which proceeded a single shot or aggressive act against the federates would be instantly burnt. These two notices were both signed by the Committee of Public Safety, the former by the full number, viz., Arnaud, Eudes, Billioray, Gambon, and Ranvier, the latter by the four, excepting Billioray. Other notices of a less general but like character were also promulgated by Delescluze, Ranvier, and Brunel.

The feverish words of Delescluze, "Fire everywhere," showed the dominating idea in the Communal mind at that moment. In all probability Delescluze did not mean his words to be understood other than as exhorting a resource to fire for purely military defensive measures, though it is difficult to divine what benefit could accrue from any fire that did not protect by encircling the federates—and a ring of flame with Communists within and Versaillais without was impracticable. Military considerations however, in the minds of the Committee of Public Safety and of some few other Communists, bore no comparison in importance to the thought of wrecking and ruining Paris, so that the Versaillais should have a city of ashes for their conquest and should have to mourn over a victory as for a calamitous defeat. "Fire everywhere!" In Delescluze, Communal intelligence reached its highest development: in him there was greater earnestness and power than in

[1] Du Camp, t. ii. p. 396.

any of his colleagues. His words seemed to sanction the wanton and spiteful destructiveness which roamed rampant through the puerile minds of those surrounding him; there was no longer hesitation in commanding incendiarism to leap out of its lair. We have seen already how Brunel set the Rue Royale on fire; this was the first conflagration to order: on Eudes will fall the reproach of the second.

Eudes, however, merits some further recognition in this connection. Though not the first to command the match to be put to the inflammable materials stored up for incendiary purposes, he had been undoubtedly the chief in advocating the adoption of preparations to this end, the most violent in clamouring for Paris to be burnt and the most venomous in hatred of the Versaillais. His overweening vanity marked him out in his own estimation to be a leader of men—now he is playing his rôle! let him lead where only brutes will follow.

Between five and six in the afternoon Eudes was in the Rue de Lille, in his usual gay military attire and on horseback, directing the preliminary operations of spilling petroleum on the walls and floors of the Palace of the Legion of Honour, the Palace of the Council of State, the barracks and other extensive Government buildings situated between the Rue de Lille and the Quai d'Orsay. With him was Mégy; the federate Decamp, who had shot the *concierge* Thomé the preceding day, and an Algerian Spahi whom Eudes had delighted to attach to his *entourage.* Five women, whose names were Marchais, Papavoine, Retiffe, Masson, and Suetens, formed the principal agents by whom the incendiary matter was distributed.[1] The Versailles army was close at hand, but to give it battle like men was the furthest thought from these federates' minds. Petroleum and powder having been scattered and daubed about to a sufficient extent, Eudes raised his sword—at this signal a clarion sounded and a federate officer fired his revolver on a little rivulet of oil which had run out from the courtyard of the Legion of Honour Palace and thus set it on fire. A flame ran along the oil into the Palace and the incendiarism was commenced. At the same time the other buildings which had been

[1] 4me Conseil de Guerre, Sept. 4th and 5th, 1871.

similarly prepared were also set on fire, after which Eudes with his followers departed from the scene and withdrew to the Hôtel de Ville.[1] Fire ever scoffs at difficulties—here its path was made easy. The flames enveloped the huge structures with rapidity, destroying countless historical and official documents that were stored therein, and sending forth huge clouds of smoke into the air.

The malevolence of the federates ended not even with this triumph of barbarism over civilization. Some of Eudes' men took matters into their own hands and began to set on fire the private houses of the Rue de Lille and the Rue de Bac. The occupants of these rushed out in a frenzy of despair, protesting, but it was useless; neither the lamentations of women nor the cries of children were yielded to. Petroleum was spilt, and doors and windows broken so that the fire might more easily rage. From house to house, almost the entire length of the street, the federates, fire mad, carried the inflammable liquid and set it alight. During the night, twenty-two private houses or shops of the Rue de Lille and seven of the Rue de Bac were all blazing and adding their lurid glare to the immense conflagration of the official buildings.[2]

Bergeret, at the Palace of the Tuileries, the historic residence of the Napoleons and of other Kings of France—for which reason it was detested by the Communists—had similar business on hand. Returning from the Hôtel de Ville in the afternoon he called together his chief men, of whom let there be named Victor Benot, a colonel, Etienne Boudin, a captain, and Kaweski, a colonel—coarse and vulgar individuals, whose titles ill represented the status in life for which alone they were fitted. Bergeret communicated to these men the decision of the Committee of Public Safety, and his own wish, that the Tuileries should be burnt, and commanded them to make preparations accordingly. His hearers were eager to assent to the diabolical design and at once set about its execution. Barrels of powder were placed in the centre of the palace, and throughout all the rooms buckets of petroleum, of liquid tar, and of other inflammable matters were scattered—on

[1] Du Camp, t. ii. pp. 127-131.

[2] Mottu, p. 8.

walls, floors, carpets, furnishings. The articles removed from M. Thiers' house by order of the Commune were here stored—so much the more to burn! The Palace was of huge extent; not until nine o'clock at night were all the apartments duly saturated with oil, sprinkled with powder or daubed with tar, but, this preparatory work being at last finished, no time was lost in setting the place on fire. Squads of federates with lights fixed at the end of long poles, started the conflagration at each end of the building, leaving the centre, where the powder was massed, to be reached by the fire itself. Quickly the flames burst out and seized one more massive palace for its prey. They crept on from ends to centre, enveloping the whole structure with a resistless giant-like power. Towards midnight the barrels of powder exploded with a tremendous report, shaking the ground, shattering the masonry, and grimly expediting the ruin of the beautiful and costly edifice.[1] As a spectacle, the sight was magnificent beyond compare. Flames, 120 feet high, shot above the burning roofs, and the sky was lit up with a bed of awe-imposing fire.

It was not until about nine o'clock at night that the existence of the various fires became generally suspected in and around Paris, for the ordinary transmission of news was wholly suspended, and the lamentable truth could only be guessed at when the unwonted red tongues of flame and the lurid glare of the sky became visible through the darkness. All over Paris the immense red luminance was seen, showing in relief huge clouds of black smoke, which, in their turn, served only to reveal with greater vividness the hideous fire monster beneath them. Parisians who were not Communists stood aghast at the sight, and wondered whether the repeated threats to burn the city were really being transformed into facts, despite their repellent character. Amidst the gloom, the trepidation, and the anxiety of the hour there sounded continually forth the crackling reports of firearms and the dull heavy boom of artillery, for the combat in the region where the fires were ceased not with the darkness, but prolonged itself into the night. The fires burnt without hindrance: it had been to stultify oneself to

[1] Du Camp, t. ii. pp. 200-210. 3me Conseil de Guerre, affaire Benot, Nov. 12th, 1872.

permit efforts to be made to extinguish that which had been purposely lit, and the Commune committed no such inconsistency. The firemen in Paris had been prohibited from leaving their quarters : at the risk of being shot they were compelled to be passive spectators of conflagrations which they longed to counteract.[1]

This day, destined to have such a mournful yet theatrical termination, witnessed also some lugubrious scenes of another description. Quick-set suspicion alighted upon two more unfortunate individuals, innocent of any complicity with the Versaillais, but nevertheless arraigned with all speed before Courts-Martial and condemned to death. One of these was arrested on the Place de la Bastille and taken to the Petite Roquette, where a Court-Martial sat. A vociferating crowd denounced him as a gendarme, and the crowd's ears had to be tickled with his blood. Escorted to Rue de la Vacquerie, at the side of the Grande Roquette, the man was shot both by the federates of the escort and by a woman named Marceline Epilly, who had indeed claimed to have the privilege of shooting first.[2] The second case was that of a railway employé, bearer of business letters, who was arrested in the neighbourhood of Fort Ivry and was taken to that fort charged with being a spy. A hastily improvised Court-Martial, formed of the chief officers of the garrison, sentenced him to death, and in a very short time the sentence was carried out.[3]

Raoul Rigault, the one strong-willed man of the Commune, has also some deeds to lay claim to in this day's record. Mindful of the approach of the Versaillais, he forgot not to remove the fourteen hostages from Mazas to La Grande Roquette for whom on the previous night there had not been sufficient cartage accommodation procurable. He also sent to the prison of La Conciergie an order to deliver up to him thirty-four gendarmes who were there enclosed. The old officials, fearing a sinister result attending upon compliance with the request, falsely told the messenger that the thirty-four gendarmes had been already removed to La Roquette, and they showed the

[1] Du Camp, t. iv. pp. 233, 234.
[2] 13me Conseil de Guerre, 29th June, 1872. Du Camp, t. iv. p. 154.
[3] 14me Conseil de Guerre, 9th October, 1872.

unsuspecting emissary some apparent evidence that the statement was correct.[1] Lies are rarely justifiable in this frail and imperfect world, but let him alone say they are never so, who has never erred. Martyrs and heroes have died rather than foresworn themselves—all honour to them; but it is a far different case when the safety of other lives hangs upon the issue. The question of absolute truth, regardless of consequences, is one not to be judged by ethics, but by circumstances.

The thirty-four gendarmes, then, were passed over and remained at the Conciergie, which place, close by the Prefecture of Police, where Rigault's quarters were, was nevertheless unassociated with judicial punishments of a serious nature, and Rigault troubled his brain no further about it. Moreover, were not the Palace of Justice, the Prefecture, and other buildings thereabouts to be burnt when the fitting moment arrived?—fire would complete any unfinished work.

The prison of Ste. Pélagie was more in Rigault's thoughts. There was the lawyer and journalist, Chaudey, who had particularly excited Rigault's animosity. Delescluze also considered Chaudey as a personal enemy, by reason of some little peccadillo that the Delegate of War had committed in his younger days, of which Chaudey had knowledge.[2]

This 23rd of May was a notable day for Chaudey—it was the anniversary both of his marriage and of the birth of his only son. At great danger, across barricaded streets and through flying missiles from the contesting armies, Chaudey's wife had come to see him; she besought from Augustin Ranvier, the governor of Ste. Pélagie, permission to dine with her husband that day in honour of the double event which it called to remembrance. Chaudey joined his entreaties to hers, but their efforts were futile; the hard-hearted governor was obdurate, and the anniversary meal had to be eaten apart from each other, amidst a sadness unrelieved by the cheering radiance that the granting of this slight favour would have brought.

Towards eleven o'clock at night Rigault appeared at the

[1] Du Camp, t. i. pp. 123–125.

[2] Daudet, p. 109.

prison and informed the officials that Chaudey and three gendarmes also enclosed there as hostages were to be instantly shot, in compliance with the Communal decree. Chaudey was first called, and an execution company of eight federates formed. He expostulated, but to no avail. He was marched to the spot where the execution was to take place, and thought to move the implacable Rigault by appealing to him for the sake of his wife and children: again useless. Chaudey was placed upright beside a wall, Rigault raised his sword as a signal and the eight federates fired, but only one ball struck the prisoner, and that inflicted only a slight wound. Chaudey waved his right arm and cried, "Vive la République!" then various officials of the prison came close up and discharged gun and revolver into him, blowing part of his head away before they finished.[1] Chaudey's wife had left her husband, saying, "Until to-morrow"; on the morrow she appeared and was told her husband had been transferred to the Prefecture. Not until the 25th did she learn that that "To-morrow" would never arrive!

Having settled Chaudey, Rigault had the three gendarmes, by name Bouzon, Capdeville, and Pacotte, brought in front of the dead body of the journalist, and there shot—an operation no more skilfully performed than in the previous case, but as determinedly completed, one Preau de Vedel, the "librarian" of the prison, being among the most callous of the human butchers. It is a small matter, after killing a man, to rifle his pockets—but, as showing the heartlessness and criminality of these federates, it is worth recording that they appropriated from Chaudey's dead body whatever articles of value they found thereon, whilst the bodies of the four were disposed of with no more regard than if they had been so much filth.[2]

Massacres within walls and without! The few non-combatants who perished, victims of political passion and intolerance, excite perhaps more sympathy than the many federates and soldiers who died by the ordinary processes of war. The latter class, and the federates in particular, might now be reckoned

[1] *Rapport d'ensemble*, p. 152. Du Camp, t. i. pp. 161–164.

[2] Du Camp, t. i. pp. 161–164. Daudet, pp. 112–116. *Rapport d'ensemble*, p. 153.

in thousands. The streets were strewn with dead bodies in frightful array, left where they fell, uncovered, untended. There was enough to do to remove the wounded and alleviate their suffering: those past mortal aid received not mortal care. Who shall tell in its fulness the horrors of war? Detached episodes, singular occurrences, individual losses, are here and there writ—but the sum total of pain, of grief, of bereavement, of poverty, misery, blighted lives, and cheerless homes: it is incomprehensible. Yet will men go on fighting and killing each other. Human life, on a war footing, is not of more account than brute life. War is, in truth, only a recurrence to the original brutal condition of man, when he also roamed the world as the wild beasts of the earth yet do, and his life was accounted not more precious than theirs. All the refinements of scientific implements for the more speedy slaughtering of antagonists will never render of war a thing civilized, or convert the deliberate putting to death of one's fellow into anything but a deed distinctly and irrefutably marking our kinship to brutes. This heritage from a former era has remained irreducible, whilst intelligence has wonderfully grown, but Intellect cannot remove the foundation upon which it rests, mental and corporeal war being in principle the same; even Christianity, that gospel of Peace and Goodwill, has spread and developed by the aid of the sword, without which it had never been what it is. Civilization has brought with it an aggravation of the evil it has been powerless to subdue—it has rendered death, to our eyes, a fearful thing. We, more sensitive than our ancient ancestors to emotions of love, more keen of life because of the artificial pleasures which are introduced into it, more worked upon by considerations of a future existence—look for the first time upon death—so placid, so mysterious—with awe and convulsive throbbings. The beginning of life—lost in the far-off vistas of prehistoric creation—and the ending—ever present—are alike unfathomable, and it is not more wonderful to imagine life's spontaneous existence than it is to understand its absolute annihilation. Birth we wonder not at, for it is an offshoot *of* life: it is the same essence, no more mysterious than that which it sprung from; death, however, has no parentage, it has no succession: it is a thing aloof, grim, repulsive, silent, motionless—foreign and antagonistic

to our whole nature, yet irresistible and therefore fearful. But so mouldable are our temperaments, that we become accustomed even to this frightful adversary; familiarity with it breeds often contempt, ever indifference; were it otherwise, there would be neither wars nor undertakers.

FOURTH DAY: WEDNESDAY, MAY 24TH, 1871.

A FEW minutes after midnight, the messenger whom Brunel had sent to the Hôtel de Ville for instructions, returned with the message that the Committee of Public Safety reaffirmed their order to burn or blow up the Ministry of Marine, and that a company of federates was already on the way thither to remove the wounded. Brunel did not further contest the order, but gave certain instructions to a subordinate, and then, with the bulk of his forces, evacuated the various positions he held, without being observed by the Versaillais, and retired to the Hôtel de Ville.

Presently there arrived the federates who were to remove the wounded; another band of federates proceeded to spill petroleum and otherwise prepare the building for burning. To delay the first proceeding was to delay also the second; this the surgeon in charge endeavoured to do, though with only a partial success. The Ministry was eventually got ready for the projected incendiarism, when the lighting up was averted by the stratagem of one of the permanent officials—attached to the Versailles cause—who, representing that the building was already surrounded by the enemy, first frightened the incendiarists into concealing themselves in the upper part of the structure and then took steps to counteract and destroy the preparations they had made. After many exciting incidents, the Ministry was at length saved from further danger by the arrival, at five in the morning, of Admiral Pothuau, Thiers' Minister of Marine, and a few naval officers and men, who searched the building for federates and put to death all of them that were found. A little later, other Versailles troops arrived and took possession of neighbouring positions.[1]

The Place Vendôme had been also evacuated by the federates

[1] Du Camp, t. iii. pp. 91–98.

when Brunel withdrew his men from the Ministry of Marine, though there, as in the latter case, the Versaillais were not aware of the fact until some hours afterwards. The Place was, however, occupied between two and three o'clock in the morning. The flames from the burning buildings on both sides of the Seine spurred on and exasperated the Versaillais. Another immense block, the Ministry of Finances, in the Rue de Rivoli, was now on fire, lit by whose order or by whom is not known. Ferré, the delegate to the Police, is charged with having ordered it, but on evidence which is unreliable. However, petroleum had been made use of, for the smell of this oil was unmistakable when the Ministry was entered, as presently was the case, by the Versaillais, and efforts made to save from the fire the most valuable papers and books. On the roof and fifth floor the fire raged furiously, whilst the lower part of the building was comparatively untouched, though, singularly, on the second floor, furniture was discovered burning in the rooms, whilst neither the ceilings nor the partitions were attacked.[1] The latter fact was a clear indication of incendiarism, though the former pointed rather to an external cause such as the bursting of a shell—even as on the Monday the roof had thus been set alight. It was impossible, however, to extinguish this fire, for not only were the water cisterns in the Ministry empty, but the water conduits were stopped up.[2] The whole building and an immense quantity of official documents, which could not be removed in time, became a prey to the flames. When Jourde learnt of the fate which had befallen the Ministry in which he had been chief, he wept. He, at least, was innocent of incendiarism.

Other fires came to be kindled in the vicinity of the Louvre by Bergeret's followers. Bergeret "himself," having accomplished the destruction of the famous palace of the kings and emperors, sought not for further glory and went into concealment whilst he could, lest the Versaillais should fall upon him and cut short his career without ceremony. His officers, however, were not so quickly satiated with the exciting novelty of authorized incendiarism. After having supped with their

[1] and [2] 3me Conseil de Guerre, 21st and 22nd August, 1871.

chief they betook themselves to the Palais Royale, where a federate colonel named Boursier, with others, was preparing the way for lighting up another conflagration, in accordance with instructions received from Eudes during the night. Petroleum, there, as elsewhere, was the principal inflammagent employed. It was the Palais Royale, properly so called, which the federates sought to destroy, and not the quadrangular array of shops and restaurants commonly meant by that name. About three o'clock in the morning the fire was kindled in three different parts of the palace; the flames spread with amazing rapidity and soon enveloped the greatest portion of the block. The proximity of the fire to the Bank alarmed the officials there, and they, with some well-disposed citizens, took steps to check the flames, though this was a proceeding involving considerable risk, because the federates who prowled about the streets hesitated not to shoot down any person who tried to stop the burnings.[1]

Colonel Boursier, Victor Benot, and Kaweski, having achieved their mission at the Palais Royale, crossed over to the Imperial Library, situated in the buildings adjoining the Louvre, taking with them some vessels of petroleum. Similar preparations were made at this place, and at four o'clock the fire was lit there also, the result of it being to destroy over 90,000 volumes, many of them being exceedingly choice and rare.[2]

The Louvre was now in great jeopardy, both from the last-named fire and from that of the Tuileries, which was spreading along the roofs in the direction of the famous museum and picture galleries. To save this priceless collection of antiquities and paintings—forming, more than did anything else in Paris, the nation's pride—the Marquis de Sigoyer, commandant of a battalion of infantry stationed at the Place de la Concorde, took upon himself to act without orders, and proceed thither with his men. Though the quays were being swept with a federate fire from the Pont Neuf, he contrived to get into the interior squares of the Tuileries and in face of the Louvre—made, with his men, a chain by which water was obtained in all sorts of buckets from the river, and, by daring and energy,

[1] Du Camp, t. ii. p. 211; t. iii. pp. 265–272.

[2] De la Brugère, p. 207. Du Camp, t. ii. p. 213.

managed to stay the progress of the fire.[1] In the Rue de Rivoli, a line regiment also came upon the scene and assisted to quell the fire from that side. Furthermore, the chief of the Parisian fire brigade, with a numerous staff, arrived, by command of Marshal Macmahon, and took over the operations of quenching the conflagrations—a work which could be attended to wherever the Versaillais were and the federates were vanquished. One city's fire brigade, however, even were it wholly unhampered by a relentless warfare and by deliberate and murderous obstruction, was manifestly insufficient to cope with these tremendous furnaces. Already help was telegraphed for from the provinces!

The fire demon was let loose as he never before had been. When once so fearful a deviation from civilized usage is made as to authorize for spiteful political purposes a systematic and extensive incendiarism of the most noble buildings, the most important documents, and most valuable artistic and industrial treasures, a return to brute life has been accomplished more pronounced even than brutal warfare. It was a change welcome enough to certain individuals who chafed under the self-control and subjection which civilization imposed upon them. Many of the Communists, from Eudes, Bergeret, and their colleagues down to the simple federate, were such, and, the chief men having set the example and the Committee of Public Safety by its orders having sanctioned arson as a principle of practiques, the lower grades of federates were not slow to apply the principle when and where it pleased them. Thus it is impossible to trace directly to the Committee of Public Safety or to any leading Communist *every* incendiarism that occurred in Paris at this period, but it is equally impossible to refrain from visiting that Committee and its fire-brand colleagues with the moral responsibility of almost every one. Some few fires may have arisen through the bursting of shells, and, in such a reversal of the usual conditions of existence, from other hands than Communists', but these allowances taken together would affect only an insignificant trifle of the fires which have been and are yet to be recorded.

[1] Du Camp, t. ii. pp. 235–242.

Since the dawn of the 24th, a fire had burst out at the Carrefour de la Croix Rouge, near the Boulevard St. Germain; several houses in the Rue de Rivoli were ignited before the federates quitted that locality; about six o'clock in the morning, the extensive emporium known as the Tapis Rouge, at seven o'clock, the Lyrique Theatre, and, later in the day, the Théâtre Porte St. Martin were each invaded by federates, prepared with petroleum, and set on fire. These were all big conflagrations, adding a huge quota of flame, smoke, and destruction to the horrible pandemonium already existent. A cloud of smoke was forming over the centre of the town, and beneath it flames seemed rampant everywhere, lighting up the dead bodies that lay about and in some cases charring and consuming them, whilst still the battle betwixt federate and Versaillais raged furiously at a score of places at once, and human blood flowed as freely as beasts' blood in a slaughter-house, with tenfold attendant agony and repulsiveness.

The unexpectedly stubborn resistance which the Versaillais had met with, had, even before the fires commenced, almost exhausted their patience and rendered them, fighting against countrymen, savage and merciless. The wanton destruction of national property and monuments that was now made evident turned the last vestige of endurance into a remorseless thirst for vengeance, and from this moment mercy, consideration, quarter, were things unknown to the attacking army. Federates, armed or unarmed, were shot or sabred relentlessly; those who had already been taken prisoners were marched through the streets and to Versailles with absolute indifference to every feeling of humanity, neither natural necessities nor bodily weaknesses being regarded; loiterers were shot straightway, recalcitrants on the instant received their death-blow. The non-Communist population of Paris in the parts of the city delivered from Communal rule, now rose up in a frenzy of revenge against the federates. Absurd tales passed from mouth to mouth that bands of women were parading the streets spilling petroleum and setting fire to houses. It is easy to understand how such a report should be spread, because some women had undoubtedly been *petrouleuses*, as they were called; there were, however, no bands of women such as the rumour referred to. Nevertheless,

the statement was credited and acted upon; every woman seen with a can, bottle, or other vessel was arrested, and a clamorous crowd demanded her death; in many instances this awful climax was reached.[1] Federates who sought to escape by disguise or concealment were denounced to the Versaillais soldiers, and were shot without further ado. Every Versailles soldier almost—certainly every petty officer—had in his own hands the life or death of any suspected person; and whilst it was terribly easy to arouse suspicion, it was tremendously difficult, before an excited and exasperated people, to show that it was groundless.

On the side of the federates there was a similar implacability shown. True, there continued to be extensive desertions of the faint-hearted or more calculating elements, but this merely left the residue of a more determined character, which fought resolutely and doggedly, notwithstanding that it was being continually beaten and forced back. Let it not be forgotten that the federate was but a National Guard called into existence only during the past twelve months, more civilian than soldier, with the martial instinct, but not the military training. It must be admitted that he shunned an open field, fought best behind the shelter of barricades and houses, and generally ran away if by chance he were surprised by the enemy where there was no intervening structure to afford him some protection. Nevertheless, his bravery was beyond question—the thousands slain and wounded on *both* sides prove it up to the hilt. It might almost be said that he fought for fighting's sake, for what gain could he now hope for, driven from half the city by a conquering army infuriated with rage and vengeance? He was the dupe of his leaders, who encouraged resistance at a safe distance; up to this point not one of his elected representatives had been even wounded in the struggle that had rent the city already for seventy hours, though some few had been arrested. Upon him has ever fallen the brunt of their political manœuvres, whilst they—miserable cowards for the most part—selfishly glide into their pre-arranged hiding-places, don their disguises, or, of those who are yet active in the fray, keep themselves carefully out of the battle range.

[1] Du Camp, t. ii. p. 402. Lefrançais, p. 355.

Tangible evidence of the break up of the Commune was not wanting. The Hôtel de Ville, the possession of which prior to March 18th had been so coveted, and which since that date had been the principal symbol of Communal as it had long been of popular authority; to which the eyes of federate and workman turned as to a fetish; which in times past had ruled France and had exerted no inconsiderable influence even on European events: this auxiliary of power—a stronghold materially as well as sentimentally—was vacated in the early hours of the morning by all the Communal authorities and officials, except Pindy, the governor, and a few chosen men. The retreat was operated secretly, for the 6,000 federates guarding the Hôtel knew nothing of it.[1] The reasons for thus vacating without the semblance of a struggle such a formidable position were threefold, and applied to the withdrawal from the Tuileries and other places, as well as to this. First there came the selfish consideration of personal safety, ever paramount to the majority of the Communist chiefs; then came the conviction that they could not hold their ground against the Versaillais; lastly was the fiendish desire to avenge their defeat in the most stinging manner possible by consigning the vacated buildings to the flames. Yea, even the Hôtel de Ville was doomed to this—for such purpose were Pindy and his men left behind. The municipal palace shall be burnt, notwithstanding all its old associations and symbolical significance—equally regardless of the vast piles of important civil documents which therein are contained!

There was an abundance of material wherewith to carry out this incendiarism: stores of powder and petroleum. Barrels of one and kegs of the other were placed alternately throughout the structure; the petroleum kegs were opened and the contents allowed to run out, carpets and floors being thus saturated with the oil; then, at about ten o'clock in the morning, a match was applied, and speedily the building was in a blaze, burning with amazing rapidity and virulence.[2] Lefrançais and Eugène Gérardin came up at the commencement of this conflagration, being themselves innocent of any participation in it,

[1] Lefrançais, pp. 325, 331. De la Brugère, p. 218.
[2] Du Camp, t. iv. p. 245.

and gave instructions to the federates to withdraw immediately to the Place de la Bastille, lest the explosion of the powder which they knew to be stored in the cellars should cause them injury or death. The barricades were forsaken accordingly, but only a small part of the federates went to the designated spot; most of them seized the opportunity to go to their homes.[1]

The Comité Central, in these last days, showed more homogeneity than the Commune. The latter had had no regular sittings since Sunday and no deliberations worthy of the name —nothing but confused, disorderly discussions, in which the strongest-lunged were heard the best, and proposals of all sorts came one on top of another, burying themselves by their multiplicity and having only a vehement wrangling for a funeral oration. The former was more compact, though it also could not be denominated other than disorderly and excited. Nevertheless, it had held frequent sittings in its location in Rue Basfroi, and had had numerous negotiations with the Republican League for the Rights of Paris, from which it apparently expected great results. The League had also, each day this week, endeavoured to secure by peaceable means a termination of the sad conflict. This morning, representatives of both parties were hovering about the Hôtel de Ville, anxious and hopeful even then to arrange a compromise, and the Comité Central had just placarded a last manifesto on the walls, proposing terms of settlement with its adversary. Alas, for the intelligence exhibited by both these bodies! they each insisted upon absurd conditions of absolution for the Commune and dissolution of the National Assembly.[2] They were ridiculous requests—fit only for a victorious and not a defeated Commune.

The Comité Central had, however, some misgivings as to the incendiarisms; it wished to prevent some new conflagrations for which orders had already been given, to wit, the Grenier d'abondance, the National Printing Office, the National Archives, and the Arsenal. It placed counter orders in the hands of the League, but left to the latter the duty of distributing them at the

[1] Lefrançais, pp. 331, 332.

[2] *La Vérité*, p. 411.

various places denominated.[1] The Comité Central had, in fact, lost influence over the federates,[2] whose irritation and excitability was supreme—the latter had literally taken the war into their own hands, and there was no moderating control over them—they might be intensified in their passion, but could not be lifted out of it save by a crushing defeat. To such lengths do laxity, tolerated indiscipline, and gross flattery lead!

The League for the Rights of Paris took the counter orders, and was successful in saving the respective buildings from fire at least for that day, though it was impossible to foretell what the morrow might bring forth.

Orders had also been sent from the Hôtel de Ville to burn the Bourse and the cathedral of Nôtre Dame; the destruction of the first was never attempted, owing to the proximity of the Versaillais, but the second was nearly accomplished. Three wood piles were erected by the federates inside the venerable and beautiful cathedral, and they were ignited during the morning. Fortunately the medical staff of the hospital Hôtel Dieu, close by, were on the look-out for such an event, and when it became evident that the fire had been placed to the building, they rushed out to extinguish it, being assisted therein by a few well-disposed people—including a fireman—who were thereabout. Their efforts, prosecuted under difficulty, were finally successful, and the ancient cathedral suffered only trifling damage.[3]

About the same time—11.30 a.m.—a tremendous explosion was heard over a large portion of the city. It was caused by the powder magazine in the Luxembourg Gardens having been blown up by the federates, occasioning great destruction of property in the neighbouring Rue Vavin. Later in the day, another explosion of powder occurred in the Panthéon quarter; it had been rumoured that the Panthéon was to be blown up, but happily the Versaillais arrived there ere such a design was placed in execution.

The Ile de la Cité was the scene of further excesses, even when the Versaillais were within sight of it, and the battle raged on each of its sides. Here, at the western end, stood the extensive block of buildings wherein Rigault and Ferré had

[1] *Le 18 Mars*, p. 333. [2] *La Vérité*, p. 411.
[3] Du Camp, t. iv. pp. 212–214.

their peculiar location and province—the Palais de Justice, the Prefecture de Police, the Depôt, and the Conciergie. The two latter places were full of prisoners, some of whom were objects of special thought on the part of Ferré.

At eight o'clock in the morning, Ferré, accompanied by some of the "Avengers of Flourens," went to the Depôt, where Georges Veysset was imprisoned, and caused him to be brought out. Veysset, on seeing Ferré, immediately said, "When I was arrested, I had 20,000 francs on me; I wish to know what has become of them." "Be not uneasy," replied Ferré, "we are about to settle all accounts at once." The "Avengers of Flourens" closed around the prisoner and marched him to the open space beside the statue of Henri IV. on the Pont Neuf, Ferré accompanying. At this point, the latter ordered the execution party to fire; this was done, and the dead body of Veysset thrown over the embankment into the river. Then said the Police Delegate to those around him, "He deserved to be struck by the justice of the people: you see, citizens, we do everything openly." [1] Veysset was not a hostage; his death is regrettable, but it was a contingency the risk of which he had knowingly ran and the advent of which had been bravely borne.

About an hour after this occurrence Ferré entered the Prefecture of Police, again accompanied by "Avengers of Flourens" and some officials, and requested that certain prisoners, whom he specified by name, should be brought before him. One of the names he called out was that of Joseph Ruault, a stone-cutter, who had been arrested on suspicion of being a secret Bonapartist agent, and who was also credited with having given information of the complot of bombs for which so many Communist leaders had been tried before the High Court of Blois in the preceding July. This Ruault was in the prison of La Roquette, having been one of the forty hostages removed thereto from Mazas on the 22nd inst. There was, however, another Ruault confined in the Prefecture, and he was undoubtedly placed in great danger by Ferré's request. An official of the Prefecture named Braquond, suspecting Ferré's sinister design, circumvented the latter's wishes by a dexterous deceit, whilst the "Avengers of

[1] Du Camp, t. i. pp. 98, 99.

Flourens" occupied themselves in making the wood-work of the Prefecture easily inflammable by the free use of petroleum. A similar operation, under the supervision of Rigault, was being effected at the same time in the Palais de Justice. At eleven o'clock the Prefecture was set on fire in the upper floors; the flames spread and were witnessed with affright by a mass of men and women who were imprisoned in the Depôt, and who thought they were about to be burnt alive. The women screamed—at which Ferré commanded Braquond to make them hold their peace. Braquond, instead of doing this, gave orders to the attendants to open all the doors and set free the prisoners. This done, he put himself at their head and returned to meet Ferré, but the latter, with his associates, had disappeared. The Prefecture burned, the Palais de Justice burned; the Depôt, the Conciergie, and the marvellously enchanting Holy Chapel escaped. The people whom Braquond had liberated were compelled to remain in the Depôt all day, for the streets on either side were swept by a constant fusillade between the combatants; however, their freedom was made secure in the evening by the arrival of the Versaillais.[1] Among those who thus regained their liberty was M. Borme, the explosive expert, who had misled the Scientific Delegation.

Two other prisons were relieved the same day by the arrival of the Versaillais, viz., La Santé and St. Lazare, and the prisoners liberated, among them being the Madame Legros who had been arrested for making tricoloured armlets. The governors of each of these establishments were arrested, though, beyond being Communists, there was not much to lay to their charge.

The Versaillais advance during the day was, at the south of the Seine, limited to the Luxembourg and Panthéon quarters in the centre, and the Parc de Montsouris and Insane Asylum in the outer circumference. Their approach to Luxembourg had been the signal for firing the powder magazine, and they had to attack the palace under a hail of balls and a heavy artillery fire from a battery in the Rue Soufflot. After the Luxembourg was secured, efforts were directed to the Panthéon,

[1] Du Camp, t. i. pp. 99-112, 126, 127.

which was strongly fortified and defended. This locality was the centre of the hot-headed youthdom which studies in Paris and becomes the feeding-trough of successive revolutions, and of which, in the Commune, Rigault was the most notable representative. The entire army in the South was in the afternoon concentrated on this spot; it was eventually taken, but the approaches to it were more stubbornly contested than the Panthéon itself, the federates at which flew in dismay when they saw their fancied secure place invaded by the enemy. They were, however, almost completely surrounded, and merely ran from one danger to another. The carnage was dreadful, the Place du Panthéon was strewn with bodies, and the house doorways, into which the hapless federates had rushed for escape, were blocked up with the dead.[1] One of the killed was Piazza,[2] who had joined Brunel in the futile attempt to create an insurrection on the 27th January.

A little while before this result had been attained, the 17th battalion of infantry, on their way to the Panthéon, saw enter hastily into a house a federate, who, by his uniform, was evidently a commander. They fired upon, but missed him. Quickly gaining the house, a corporal and a few men from the battalion entered it also, arrested the proprietor, and demanded to know where was the federate officer who had just gone in. The man declared he was upstairs, and that he could not escape, as there was no other outlet from the house than the front; he went upstairs to find him. The federate was Raoul Rigault; the house was his place of concealment, which during the whole Communal era he had retained unknown to any of his colleagues and his identity unknown even to the proprietor of the house. The latter individual found Rigault at the top of the staircase and told him the circumstances. Rigault at first wished to escape by the roof, but the other refused to permit this, saying, truly enough, that the soldiers would shoot *him*, if Rigault went not down. Rigault, after a moment's hesitation, replied, "Be it; I am not a coward," and he descended the stairs, met the corporal, and gave him the sword and revolver which he bore. He was surrounded by the soldiers and marched off towards

[1] Daudet, p. 92.

[2] *Rapport d'ensemble*, p. 110.

the Luxembourg. On their way, a Versailles colonel came upon the party and asked who the prisoner was. Rigault answered haughtily, "It is I, Raoul Rigault! Down with assassins!" The corporal instantly applied his revolver to Rigault's head and said, "Cry: Long live the army!" "Long live the Commune!" was the answer, and the next instant Rigault fell, shot through the head; one of the soldiers sent a second shot into his heart. Thus died a man whose delight had been to practise oppression and injustice under the guise of modern progress; whose ideal of life was inconsistent with any other human existence than his own, for, logically applied, it meant the extermination of all who opposed his will. Rigault's body was lain beside a barricade in the street—Rue Gay-Lussac—where he fell and where his hiding-place had been; women came and trod upon his belly and bruised his face, all ghastly with blood and death, hurling from their mouths coarse epithets and brutal oaths![1]

The Algerian Spahi appertaining to Eudes' staff also met with his death at the hands of the Versaillais on the south side of the Seine. He was shot in Rue Gribauval, not far from the scene of his incendiarist exploits of the preceding day.

Further south—Rue de Moulin des Pres, off the Boulevard d'Italie—a life, wholly innocent of participation in the struggle, was sacrificed by some federates belonging to the 101st battalion of National Guards, the commander of which was Sérizier, the friend of Ferré. The victim was a chemist called Dubois; he lived in a blind alley to which he had given his name. A barricade having been erected outside his dwelling, the federates had wished the previous day to enter his garden and utilise the wall therein for their defensive purposes. Dubois refused to permit this, and unwisely added words which further angered the federate to whom he spoke. In retaliation, his house was now forcibly entered: Dubois from the staircase threw sulphuric acid upon his attackers, but one of them, a youth of nineteen years named Rouillac, rushed up the stairs and killed the chemist with a gun-shot. After this the federates appropriated what monies and wines there were in the house; they hung the

[1] Daudet, pp. 138, 139. Forni, p. 58. De la Brugère, p. 230.

dead body of Dubois outside the balcony overlooking the garden, and from the latter place made it a target at which they threw broken bottles and fired their guns.[1]

On the north side of the Seine, besides St. Lazare prison, the Versaillais advance covered the church of Nôtre Dame des Victoires, the Bourse, the Bank—which was thus at last relieved from any further Communal importunities—the railway stations of the Northern and Eastern lines, the Post Office, and finally, towards nine o'clock at night, the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville. The Hôtel de Ville was still burning furiously, as also were most of the other great furnaces that had been lit, so that at night, Paris appeared to be wholly in flames, and members of the National Assembly with crowds of other people assembled on the Mont Valérien and other heights external to the city to witness the unprecedented and fearful spectacle.

Near to the burning Hôtel de Ville was the Lobau barracks,[2] where were a number of federates. How they came to be there when the barricades before the Hôtel were deserted, and what was their number, cannot be stated. The fact that is to be recorded concerning them is that they were all shot, and their number was such that it seemed a wholesale butchery to massacre them.[3] The instructions given this day to the Versaillais officers to shoot down all federates,[4] was akin in its thoroughness to the slaying of the Irish by Cromwell, but there were many officers who continued to make prisoners instead of dead carcasses, otherwise the slaughter would have been even greater than it was.

The real cause of this terrible severity lay with the Communists

[1] *Gazette des Tribunaux*, July 7th, 1872. Du Camp, t. iv. pp. 159, 160.

[2] Called now the Caserne Napoléon.

[3] There is no doubt whatever in my mind of the accuracy of this statement, for a multitude of writers refer to it, but in such general terms that any one of them could scarcely be cited as precisely authorizing the words I have used. It must be recollected that this massacre was accomplished by the Versaillais within walls—and therefore without disinterested witnesses, and it is a matter of notoriety that it has been impossible to obtain a precise account of all the summary executions effected by them: the indubitable inference being that the French authorities, if they possess the information, are afraid to make it public.

[4] Du Camp, t. ii. p. 421.

themselves—to reduce to ashes the most precious building in the capital of France, from mere wantonness and ill-will, was enough to steel even the kindest heart against them. Each fresh conflagration that the Versailles troops encountered, intensified their anger and precipitated its outburst upon whatever federates came first to hand. Thus the burning ruins of the Hôtel de Ville was the direct incentive to the Lobau massacre.

Without a pang of regret had the revolutionary Communists quitted the noble edifice, which, with such pompous display, they had formally entered eight weeks previously. From it they had gone to the mairie of the 11th arrondissement, situate Place Prince Eugène[1] in the eastern quarter of Paris, where their personal safety was rendered more secure by the circumambience of a friendly population. More than half of the active members of the Commune had by this time disappeared into concealment; of the remainder, moving in and about the 11th arrondissement, there were, of the Committee of Public Safety, Arnaud, Gambon, and Eudes; Delescluze, utterly bowed down by the untoward events of the day, averse to the wholesale incendiarism which had taken place, but powerless to withstand his young and self-willed colleagues; Jourde, still guarding the distribution of the federate pay out of the last forced requisition made on the Bank; Ferré, delegate to Police, brooding over the designs respecting the hostages cherished by Rigault and himself; Protot, delegate to Justice; Pindy, late governor of the Hôtel de Ville; Cournet, *protégé* of Delescluze, ex-delegate to Police; Lefrançais, first president or chairman of the Commune; Jules Vallès, who had written, "If M. Thiers is a chemist, he will understand what we mean"—yea, the meaning is clear now, even to unbelieving Thiers—and of the less known members, Dereure, Mortier, Verdure, Longuet, G. Arnold, Frankel, Martelet, Serailler, Champy, Avrial, Eugène Gérardin, J. B. Clément, Viard, and Chardon.

Elsewhere, active still in the Communal cause, were Ranvier, who appertained to the Committee of Public Safety; Varlin, Léo Meillet, Phillipe, Brunel, Theisz, Ostyn, Pottier, Trinquet, and Vermorel. Thirty-five members, out of an available total of

[1] Now Place Voltaire.

seventy-four. Even these thirty-five shall for the most part dwindle imperceptibly away, gliding into nooks and corners to escape the consequences of their actions.

The twenty-five members congregated within the precincts of the 11th arrondissement mairie were no longer a Commune; they talked, gesticulated, gave orders, and received reports, in the midst of and even creating inexpressible confusion. Countless plans were suggested with the utmost passion and virulence; but they lacked feasibility and strength. The members possessed only their individual influence; collective authority was gone—the vaunted solid unit "The Commune of Paris" was a bubble visibly burst even to the near-sighted federates. The latter would now, on the slightest suspicious circumstance, turn upon a Communist chief as soon as upon a Versaillais; they also were "chemical products" of a peculiar character, and a spark, from whatever quarter it might come, would cause their latent energy suddenly to expand, scattering to the winds friends and foes alike. Thus was it with the Comte de Beaufort, Communist, as Rochefort, despite his nobiliary rank; he had formerly been orderly officer to Cluseret, and was still connected with the Communal War department. On his way along the Boulevard Voltaire to the mairie where Delescluze and colleagues were, Beaufort excited the ire of the federates through whom he passed for no other reason than that he was of superior bearing to themselves. A cry was raised that he was a Versaillais; he was seized and promenaded on the shoulders of federate sailors, whilst women molested him with scissors. Delescluze chanced to see the affair, and knew how it would in all probability end. He endeavoured to gain a respite to the unfortunate, as a first step towards securing his safety. In vain; Delescluze was disregarded as though he were himself but a simple guard; De Beaufort, after undergoing more than an hour's torture, was taken to a piece of vacant ground near by and shot.[1]

Powerless to restrain passion; able only to feed it. Various orders of an incendiary character emanated from the mairie of the 11th arrondissement, signed, as a rule, by subordinates,

[1] Du Camp, t. i. pp. 258, 259.

who were anxious to emerge in any fashion from obscurity into some sort of consequence. Orders to collect chemical and inflammable materials in a church close at hand; to burn houses from which any opposition came, and, to the artillerymen on the heights of the Père Lachaise and the Buttes Chaumont, to fire on the central parts of the city, such as the Bank and Bourse—two of the principal institutions which had escaped incendiarism. Promises of support were also sent to federates who, in various quarters, were contending with the Versaillais, raising hopes which it was impossible to realize; these were supplemented by exhortations to hold out to the end—"if you do your duty, the Commune is saved"—and the infatuated and infuriated simples often did hold out to the end, whilst the wily ones who issued the request kept afar off. Considerations of humanity weighed not with these quondam leaders; they were already defeated to a sufficient extent to place beyond the least shadow of doubt their ultimate total defeat—driven from the west, the centre, the heights of Montmartre, and nearly all of the south, with not a solitary advantage to place as a set off to these tremendous losses: it was enough to have made honourable men pause and confess themselves vanquished, so that human blood might not needlessly be shed. There was, however, so little aptitude in the Communal members for genuine sentiments, and such absence of discrimination betwixt justice and injustice, that even an excessive sacrifice of men's lives, so long as they were not their own, appeared to some of them to be of trifling value.

Under circumstances such as Paris now found itself in, and with the chief members of the Commune delivered from all feelings of humanity, the hostages who remained in their possession were unlikely to receive any clemency at their hands. Not only the members who still participated in the struggle, but the whole Commune had either directly or tacitly approved of the arrest of the hostages, and, in like manner, had sanctioned the principle of executing them; there were not wanting some amongst them who were determined that their decision of the 17th May should be carried out. The active incendiarists, for instance—Eudes, Ferré, Pindy—were each capable of emulating Rigault's example. In addition to these there were, at

the 11th arrondissement mairie, others who accepted to the full their share of responsibility in extreme measures: Gambon, Arnaud, Mortier, Cournet, Viard. Of the remainder, eight appertained to the majority of the Commune, and were not likely to offer resistance to their more violent colleagues; thus, out of the twenty-five members which the mairie harboured, sixteen at least belonged to the rabid revolutionary section. Conscious that this representation cleared the path for him, Ferré, as head of the police, took the initiative to bring the question of the hostages to an issue. A court-martial was formed, presided over by a federate officer named Genton, who had been a Communal magistrate, to decide how many and which of the hostages confined within the prison La Roquette should be executed. Eventually six was the number selected, of which Archbishop Darboy, President Bonjean, and the Abbé Deguerry were specially denominated to form part, so that there should not be any chance of these three escaping. An execution company was immediately formed from amongst the Avengers of Flourens, who thronged the passages and precincts of the mairie; headed by Gabriel Ranvier and Genton, joined by Mégy and by a federate captain who had been sent by Ferré to bear witness to the execution, this company wended its way up the Rue de la Roquette to the prison. It was then about seven o'clock in the evening. Arrived at their destination, they were received by François, the director of the prison, Verig, and other officials. After some obstacles, trifling to men such as Ranvier, Genton, and Mégy, had been disposed of, the list of six names was made complete by the addition of the Pères Allard, Clerc, and Ducoudray, all men of high ecclesiastical position in Paris. Other obstacles supervened: some of the prison officials were not quite so plastic in regard to the suggested execution as the federates whose fury had been aroused in battle; even the governor, François, seemed ill at ease, and presently returned alone to his office; however, all hindrances were finally removed, and under the guidance of a brigadier named Ramain, the execution party mounted the stairs to the first floor, guarded the way whilst the six hostages were severally called from their cells, and then marched the latter down another stairway into the prison garden. Here the federate leaders discussed the

advisability of performing their business at that spot or going to one more secluded. Whilst they talked, the six hostages knelt together and prayed, at which some of the federates scoffed. Religion is nowhere more potent than in affording consolation to the suffering and the persecuted. Let it not be denied to those who can receive it!

Another place was decided upon, and the procession retook form, Ramain still guiding, and the Archbishop immediately following him. Having *en route* to descend a few steps, the venerable prelate ran lightly down them, turned round, and, his five companions being then all on the steps, raised his right hand and pronounced the absolution. Then he offered his arm to President Bonjean, who also was aged and was moreover in weak health. Having gone some distance, they came to a railing which was locked, and Ramain did not succeed in opening it promptly. Whilst they stood waiting, the Archbishop tried to reason with the federates, but he was at once accused of having acted against the people and against liberty. "I have always loved the people; I have always loved liberty," he replied, to which a federate returned, "Your liberty is not ours; you aggravate us." The party moved on again, and presently came to the end of the prison furthest away from the entrance. Here was a spot secluded enough—before them, there stood a huge towering wall erected to prevent any prisoner escaping, behind them the gaunt, silent prison; on all sides invisible to other eyes than their own. Ramain, the guide, also had disappeared, and there remained but the hostages and their executioners.

The six prisoners were arranged against the high wall in the order in which they had been placed in their cells; the firing party was in position a little way off, in it were Mégy, Verig, and a federate named Lolive, all ready to fire: Ranvier gave the word of command, and a first volley of forty or more guns was discharged into the hapless hostages; then a second volley. Five of the hostages were dead; the Archbishop still stood upright, holding up his hands as if to bless his assassins. Lolive, in shooting at him, said, "Here is *our* benediction," and Verig went close up to the Archbishop and completed the work. It was then about eight o'clock. The executioners went away, leaving the six dead bodies lying as they had fallen. During

the night Verig, Ramain, and others went to the cells which these hostages had occupied and possessed themselves of whatever articles they found therein that were worth taking, then they went with lanterns to the dead bodies and searched them also. After this operation had been performed with some needless brutality, the bodies were carelessly lifted into a hand-cart and conveyed to the cemetery of Père Lachaise, where they were thrown into an open trench.[1]

This most sinister day had witnessed incendiarisms of an immense extent of property and of unprecedented value; a bloody battle had raged throughout its duration; political animus had occasioned the death of two citizens of the highest social position, whilst others, scarcely less eminent, had also perished, innocent victims of intolerance; massacres of federates had revealed the brutal instinct even on the Versaillais' side; minor offences against civilization were rampant in all Communal quarters, and an indescribable tumult, disarray, and upheaval of ordinary conditions of existence everywhere prevailed; the whole constituting a day's record which perhaps is without parallel in modern history.

[1] Du Camp, t. i. pp. 260–274. Bargès, p. 194. *Rapport d'ensemble*, pp. 154–157.

FIFTH DAY: THURSDAY, MAY 25TH, 1871.

PARIS scarcely knew day from night. The now thick, black cloud of smoke which hung over the Seine, and on either side of it, obscured the daylight and intensified the horrors of an awful drama. The air was hot with the fires raging in every direction; close, through the cloud above and the absence of wind; fetid, with the stench arising from human blood which lay in congealed pools along the streets and splashed upon houses, and from the dead bodies which still remained where they had fallen or had been merely removed from one open place to another. Additional though smaller conflagrations had been ignited by the federates during the night in the eastern district. Viewed from a distance, the sight was majestic and terrible, never to be forgotten: in the midst of it, the terror and stupefaction were almost beyond human endurance. Men cried because of it, and because in no other way could they reduce the severe tension under which their hearts and minds laboured. The earliest lit fires still burnt on; the more recent devoured with yet unwhetted fury all that which the malign incendiarists had intended for destruction. On all sides were heard the roar of the flames, the breaking of timbers, and the crashing in of roofs and walls. The devastation was so tremendous, and the agent employed to effect it so fearful a foe to fight, that it seemed to the awe-struck Parisians almost past credence that the creatures who had set in motion such a formidable power should be of the same nature and language as themselves.

Efforts to counteract the fires were now, however, widespread in those parts of the city from which the Communists had been driven. Firemen had arrived from various provincial towns and from Belgium to assist in the work. Prisoners of the Commune, liberated by the Versaillais, were required to help at the pumps, as also were passers-by. There was indeed no lack of willingness

on the part of the well-disposed Parisians to give to the utmost of their labour in this work; but the fires had got too strong a hold, and had been too well prepared beforehand, to be easily subdued.

This day the Versailles army retook possession of the forts Montrouge, Bicêtre, and Ivry, rather by its adversary's cowardice than its own prowess. The Communist governors of these forts foresaw that their retention would presently precipitate a combat at close quarters, and they had no doubt as to who should emerge victorious from such a struggle. The evacuation of the forts was therefore decided upon, this course being assented to by Delescluze. In regard to the forts Bicêtre and Ivry, it was intended to blow them up, so that they should fall into the hands of the Versaillais merely as useless ruins. The Delegate of War had sent an order to this effect to Ragowski, the Polish commander of Fort Ivry. At this place there were four distinct powder magazines, and they were connected by means of a fuse. The evacuation having been completed, the fuse was ignited, and one of the magazines immediately exploded with a great concussion, causing considerable destruction in the vicinity; the falling masonry, however, extinguished the connecting fuse, and thus the fort suffered less damage than had been intended.[1] The garrison which left this fort consisted of over two thousand men.

Fort Bicêtre had been also doomed to destruction by prearrangement between its governor, Léo Meillet, and the general-in-chief of the federates in the south, Wrobleski.[2] The plan was frustrated by the near approach of the Versaillais to the fort, a fact which at once caused the garrison to pack up its goods in hot haste and speed off into the city—much to the relief of the Dominicans and their employés who, arrested on the 19th inst., were still confined in the fort, and who now thought that their liberty was about to be regained. However, though Léo Meillet forgot about these prisoners, his friend and companion, Sérizier, remembered them, and sent a detachment of federates to bring them into the city. A few, being Belgians, were released; one managed to escape on the way. The others,

[1] 14me Conseil de Guerre, Oct. 7th, 8th, 9th, 1872.

[2] Du Camp, t. iv. pp. 156, 157.

to the number of twenty, of whom five bore the distinguishing costume of the Dominican order, were brought into Paris, amidst the hues and cries of a crowd whose hostility was instantly aroused at the sight of the hated clerical robes. It was still early morning, and the battle in the streets was being waged with violence close to the Avenue d'Italie, along which the prisoners were hurried, passing within a stone's-throw of the spot where the chemist Dubois had been murdered the day before. In this neighbourhood was situated the federates' strongest remaining position in the South—La Butte aux Cailles—and it was being energetically attacked by the Versaillais. The prisoners were taken first to the mairie of the 13th arrondissement, but the enemy's shells fell about too freely to remain there, and thence they were removed into Sérizier's disciplinary prison, No. 38, Avenue d'Italie. Here were incarcerated already nearly a hundred federates arrested by Sérizier's orders, either on account of indiscipline or of suspected complicity with the Versaillais. This prison was in charge of one Louis Boin, nicknamed Bobèche. Sérizier's first intention had been to get the Dominicans shot at the barricades by the enemy's bullets, but this design miscarried.

One of the notable places in the 13th arrondissement defended by Sérizier and his men was the celebrated Gobelin tapestry manufactory. The approach of the Versaillais rendered their tenure of it precarious, and the establishment was abandoned after having been set on fire, in accordance with orders given by Sérizier. Later in the day Sérizier received news of further losses inflicted on the Communists by the Versaillais: this aroused his passion afresh, and he called for men of "good-will" to follow him, to break the heads of the priests. Some federates and two women, all armed, answered to his call: they repaired at once to the prison house, the door of which they faced. Bobèche went inside and summoned the *calotins*—skull-caps—to come out and save themselves, then he stationed himself outside on the pavement. From this position he ordered the Dominicans and their followers to emerge one by one. One Père Cotherault was the first to respond: the men and women of "good-will" were ready to receive him, and he was laid low ere he had gone three steps from the door. Then

came the Père Captier—one of the shining lights of his order in Paris—who, turning first to his companions and saying, "Let us go, my children, for the good God," ran out suddenly and across the street to avoid the fusillade. He was followed as quickly by the remaining eighteen prisoners, all bent on escape. The assassins were not thus to be baulked; they gave chase to the fugitives, hunted them out from behind trees, doorways, or the lateral streets into which some had fled, whilst from the windows of the surrounding houses women applauded their efforts, and men shook their fists at the unhappy runaways and laughed at their terrorized flight. Eight of the hostages managed, by agility or good fortune, to escape. The remainder were all run to earth, and shot in the Avenue d'Italie, close to the Chapel Brea, the demolition of which the Commune had decreed, but which was yet intact. The names of these victims were: priests—Captier, Cotherault, Bouvard, Delorme, Chateigneret, Gauquelin; employés—Volant, Gros, Marcel, Catala, Duitroy, Cheminal.[1] One of the eight who escaped, a young man named Petit, was subsequently found dead in the streets, but whether he had been killed in battle or assassinated was never discovered.[2]

After this business was concluded, Sérizier returned to the prison and instituted a court-martial for the trial and disposal of some of the other prisoners that were there. Barely, however, had the preliminary formalities been settled than he was informed that the Versaillais approached and were already in the Avenue d'Italie. Sérizier instantly left the room, crossed the avenue, and disappeared in one of the houses which communicated with the Avenue de Choisy. The federates also flew in various directions, though for them successful flight was difficult of accomplishment, for the Versaillais had surrounded the avenue. The formidable Communist position of the Butte aux Cailles, the artillery fire from which had dominated the Versaillais all the day, had at length been carried, and thereafter approach to the mairie of the 13th arrondissement from the western side became possible. At the same time, and to the same mairie, another portion of the Versailles army

[1] Du Camp, t. i. pp. 214-219. Larousse. *Rapport d'ensemble*, p. 161.
[2] *Ibid*

arrived by a northern route. The southern line of the fortifications was also entirely now in the hands of the Versaillais. The federates grouped about the Place d'Italie, finding their enemy in front and behind them, rushed off in disorder, but escape was almost impracticable, and hundreds of them were made prisoners.[1]

The last refuge of the Communists south of the Seine was the Place Jeanne d'Arc, at one end of which a strong barricade had been erected. To this the Versaillais arrived in the evening, and a conflict was rendered unnecessary by the submission of the 700 federates who were there.[2] Thus at the end of the day the whole of Paris and of the forts at the south side of the river were in possession of the Government troops.

North of the Seine the Versaillais were not so fortunate. Along the quays fronting the Ile St. Louis a severe cannonade went on all day, in which two gunboats joined from the river. These gunboats until the day before had formed part of the Communal naval force—a marine very limited and never of much use to the federates; they had been repossessed without much trouble.

In this vicinity stood the immense warehouses, about 400 yards in length, known as the Grenier d'abondance, which had been saved from fire the preceding day by the combined action of the Comité Central and the Republican League. The latter body was now enveloped in the Versaillais lines, and ceased thenceforth to be able to pursue its mediatorial action. The Granary of Abundance was rightly named, for it contained tremendous stores of provisions and other merchandise. Towards it the Versaillais approached, and some few of them even entered it, whereupon the preparations previously made for burning the building were instantly utilised. It was set on fire by the federates, and then evacuated. The flames speedily gained undisputed possession of the huge premises, and formed an impassable barrier betwixt the combatants. The Versaillais wished to cross the Arsenal canal, but were unable to do so in face of the violent artillery fire which came from batteries established on the Boulevard Bourdon and on the bridge of

[1] Macmahon, p. 30.

[2] *Ibid.*

Austerlitz, the aim of both which converged on the canal bridge and its approaches. Between the canal and the bridge of Austerlitz the federates had erected a formidable barricade, from which they swept the quays of both banks of the river; on the south bank one Versaillais battery had already been silenced, and had had to be replaced by another. The federates worked their guns with the utmost energy and considerable precision; they kept their enemy at bay, and taxed all his available resources in that neighbourhood.

It was, however, imperative, from the attacking point of view, to oust the federates without delay. The gunboats at full speed proceeded ahead of the army, and swept with their mitrailleuses the barricade and bridge of Austerlitz, whilst the infantry engineers, thus protected, threw a small footway over the canal. Upon this hastily constructed bridge the soldiers, having arrived thus far by gliding along the steep bank of the river, could cross and mass themselves ready to advance. The latter operation being accomplished, order was sent to the Versaillais batteries to cease firing, and then the troops ran along the river bank, under the bridge of Austerlitz, up on to Quai de la Rapée, and attacked the federates from behind—whence the conquest was easy and speedily attained.[1] After this the gunboats and troops proceeded to the next bridge across the Seine—Bercy—and vanquished the federates at that point with comparative ease. Their approach to the neighbourhood of Bercy had been the immediate cause of further incendiarisms. Phillipe, the member of the Commune for this district, had prepared the mairie and church of his arrondissement—the 12th—for fire in case of need. The need was now, to his mind, come, and he therefore set both these buildings ablaze, and then went off to headquarters at the mairie of the 11th arrondissement.[2]

The Lyons railway station, Boulevard Mazas,[3] was next seized by the Versaillais. It and several houses in the neighbourhood were set fire to by the federates before being vacated. By this time it was night. Opposite the station stood Mazas prison, which the Versaillais were anxious to relieve on account

[1] Du Camp, t. iii. pp. 102–105. Macmahon, pp. 31, 32.

[2] Du Camp, t. iv. p. 204.

[3] Now Boulevard Diderot.

of the numerous hostages and prisoners it contained. These, to the number of nearly five hundred, had practically been free the whole day. Owing to the war in the streets, it had been impossible to provision the prison as usual; the last scrap of food had been devoured the day before; barricades and fighting had enveloped the prison all this day; the governor, Garreau, had not received the orders for transference of more hostages to La Roquette, as he had anticipated; under which circumstances the prisoners had been given in the morning liberty to go out. About a hundred had immediately availed themselves of this opportunity; one of them was Blanchet, otherwise Pourille, the member of the Commune, who at once went into concealment so as to avoid the Versaillais. The other persons who left the prison placed themselves in great risk of being struck by the deadly missiles which flew about on all sides; some of them were forced by federates to join in defending the barricades, and at least one met his death whilst so doing. Those who remained at Mazas were become buoyant and confident at the proximity of the Government troops—a spirit which the non-Communist attendants of the prison shared, and which presently led to the arrest and confinement of the governor, Garreau, by his subordinates.

Shortly after the Versaillais had taken the Lyons station, they crossed over to Mazas and repossessed themselves of it. Garreau, the governor, was sent for and straightway shot.[1] The hostages received food from the soldiers, and were no longer in danger. Among them was M. Coré, whom Rigault, on the first day of his entrance to the Prefecture, had arrested.

The Versaillais had now advanced to within close contiguity of the Place de la Bastille. Mazas was not far from it on the eastern side, whilst on the western, the Government troops were even nearer. To the latter portion of the Versailles army had been assigned the task of taking the Place de la Bastille in this day's operations; but the plan was not carried out, owing to the late hour of the night at which arrival near the Place was made. Several federate positions, however, from 200 to 400 yards distance from it, were seized. The most notable of

[1] Du Camp, t. i. pp. 239–241.

these was the Place Royale,[1] which was carried with much brilliancy by the 26th battalion of Chasseurs, commanded by the Marquis de Sigoyer, whose energy had contributed so materially to the preservation of the Louvre from fire. The attack on the Place de la Bastille was to occupy the first place in the following day's operations, and Sigoyer was anxious to reconnoitre beforehand that formidable position. About midnight, unacquainting any one with his intentions, he went forward to try and get a view of the Place. He got as far as the corner house at the juncture of the Boulevard Beaumarchais and the Rue de la Bastille, when a federate, who had been concealed in the shade of a gateway, felled him to the ground with the butt end of his gun. Sigoyer was killed at the instant; his clothes were rifled of their valuables and his body left near by.[2]

The last but most important achievement of the Versailles army this day was the taking of the Place du Château d'Eau.[3] Next to Montmartre, this was the most formidable position that the Versaillais had had to encounter. Immense buildings on the north-east side of the Place formed, when united by a strong barricade, a defence of the utmost strength. The approaches to the Place, in every direction that the Versaillais could arrive by, bristled with barricades and strongholds and were defended by large numbers of federates. Communists from all parts of Paris had flocked thither, and among the rank and file there was no lack of fighting energy. Weirdness and intensified horror were imparted to the struggle by fresh incendiarisms—not tremendous in extent, as in other cases, but still enough to display the fire demon with repellent boldness. The theatre of the Porte St. Martin burned already; to it were added several houses in the Boulevard Prince Eugène,[4] the Rue Turbigo, Rue de Bondy, Rue Château d'Eau, and other streets. As the conflict advanced, extensive damage was done by the artillery, and in this neighbourhood broken or cracked walls, roofs, doorways, and windows became almost as plentiful as sound ones.

During the fighting at the Château d'Eau, Brunel, the incendiarist of the Rue Royale, was wounded, though not fatally,

[1] Now Place Vosges.
[2] Du Camp, t. ii. pp. 248, 249.
[3] Called now Place de la République.
[4] Now called Voltaire.

and placed *hors de combat.* A prominent member of the Comité Central, Maxime Lisbonne, who had formerly been an actor, was also wounded. He was, moreover, taken prisoner by the Versaillais.

Eventually, the Place du Château d'Eau and the various positions west of it, with some to the north, were occupied by the Versaillais, the federates being driven further to the eastward into the quarters of Belleville, Ménilmontant, and La Villette. The general fighting—in which, on the attacking side, nearly forty thousand troops participated—though severe and prolonged, offered not any features of special interest. Deaths, wounds, and human carnage generally, alas, were but every day and almost every hour occurrences in this most bloody week!

Not far from the Château d'Eau was the mairie of the 11th arrondissement, still the headquarters of the Communal remnant. Disorder, confusion, babble, and discord were even more rampant than before. Cohesion there was none, calmness nowhere, initiative or resolution—unless to save their own miserable bodies—equally lacking, save in three instances to be duly recorded. Defeat beyond remedy was already inflicted on the Communal cause, yet its leaders would not, as men, acknowledge the fact and take its legitimate consequences, but, as ill-natured children, they raged within themselves and racked their brains as to how they could harass their enemy, or how best they could secure his indulgence for their own persons. There were still in their power about fifteen hundred prisoners in the two prisons of La Roquette, the bulk of them being soldiers confined since the 18th March for sharing in the memorable attack on Montmartre. A plan was imagined and certain steps taken whereby these captives should be transferred from the Roquette to the mairie and church of Belleville (20th arrondissement), and their lives held as a leverage by which to compel consideration from the victorious Versaillais.

The attack on the Château d'Eau and the approach of the enemy towards the Bastille, evidenced to the Communists that the mairie of the 11th arrondissement was no longer a safe place for them. They decided to quit it and to fall back on the aforesaid mairie of Belleville. Prior to this transfer being effected, Delescluze, who, amidst all the tumultuous throng of

federates and chiefs surging within and around the mairie, had retained the most composure and directive capacity, walked up the Boulevard Prince Eugène to inspect the works of defence at the Château d'Eau ; after which he entered a house near thereto, where he paced to and fro in deep thought. There was no hiding from himself the fact that he had now arrived at the end of a long political career, and that the end was failure to achieve that for which he had fought. The Communal movement, which had started with such fair promise of brilliant success, was expiring—its own diseased and corrupted body being powerless to repel an external foe. He, Delescluze, who had done much to bring it to life, would expire with it—had he not said, on a memorable occasion, that there would be at least some members of the Commune who would not be the last to seek death, either at the ramparts or elsewhere? He was getting old and was in weak health : say it not to imply that he was bent upon earning a cheap glory by giving unto Death a life which was already at Death's door—it was not that. His ailment was not necessarily serious, but it and his age together banished completely from his mind the hope of ever being able to retrieve his lost steps. Younger men might still have looked into the future as unto a golden harvest to be reaped, but he had sown and reaped, though his sheaves were but of weeds. His career was done.

Delescluze returned to the mairie, after an absence of two hours. He had been missed, naturally ; so prominent a personage could not fail to be thought of, whether present or absent. The distrustful federates concluded that Delescluze also had disappeared, like so many of their leaders, to flee from the personal consequences of defeat, and even his return could not eradicate on the instant the false impression. He was taunted with his absence, insulted, and even menaced with blows by the federates and under officers. Delescluze took his cane and his hat, which he had just laid down, and, moving towards the door, said to his assailants and auditory, "You are all only a rabble ; not one of you is capable of going out to get killed." Vermorel started to his feet and said, "You deceive yourself, Delescluze ; I can go." Delescluze went out and retraced his way towards the Château d'Eau, followed by Vermorel, and by

several federates who were determined to see that the Delegate of War did not escape. Arrived near to the Château, he stopped: a federate behind, thinking he was about to hide or shelter himself, fired on him; the ball only grazed Delescluze's skin. Delescluze shrugged his shoulders with an air of disgust, and moved forward again. Presently a ball from the Versaillais struck him in the side, and he fell, mortally wounded. His body lay there for a day and a half before it was discovered by the Versaillais.[1]

Vermorel also was seriously wounded. He was first taken to the house of an absent friend, by whose domestic he was subsequently delivered to the Versaillais, and by them removed to Versailles, where, three weeks after receiving his wound, he died.[2]

Such were the losses inflicted this day upon the remnant of the Communal body. Within the latter the spirit of vindictive reprisals was still active, and was productive of some tragic events. Early in the day, upon an order signed by Ferré, Genton, the president of the Court-Martial, extracted from the prison La Roquette the Mexican banker, Jean Baptiste Jecker, and, assisted by François and Verig, of La Roquette, and two other federates, took him to a bare, uninhabited space beyond the cemetery of Père Lachaise and there shot him. At the Belleville mairie, not yet the shelter for the broken-up Commune, Trinquet, delegate to the 20th arrondissement, presided, and administered what he conceived to be justice. Before him there was brought a regular soldier named Rothe, who had refused to join the federates, both because he was ill and because he had no sympathy with them. His illness was put down to pretence, and his refusal to fight was speedily resolved into a sentence of death, passed by Trinquet. Rothe was delivered into the hands of the federates, and shot in the courtyard of the mairie.[3]

Later in the day two National Guards were brought before Trinquet, condemned to death for neglect of duty, and shot.[4] Cases similar to this had not been of infrequent occurrence during the last few days. Indiscipline amongst the federates

[1] Du Camp, t. i. pp. 288–298. [2] Lefrançais, p. 337.
[3] and [4] Du Camp, t. ii. pp. 336–338.

had been so rank and had received such tolerance, that it was not possible now, even in such an extremity, to secure obedience. Punishment of death was at last, when too late to have practical effect, resorted to.

The federates had now only the north-east portion of Paris in their hands. They were crowded back to their last stronghold. At midnight the mairie of the 11th arrondissement was finally vacated, and that of the 20th further eastward constituted headquarters. The members of the Commune still visible, confusedly talking, but few doing aught else, were Ferré, Varlin, Jourde, Eudes, Billioray, Arnold, Lefrançais, Miot, Dereure, Avrial, Oudet, J. B. Clément, Cournet, Frankel, Babick, Johannard, Ranvier, Protot, Vallès, and Phillipe. Some members of the Comité Central also were there, and these, now that Delescluze was dead, usurped the functions of War Director. It was the Comité Central which, more than any other body, had contributed to reduce the Delegate of War's authority to a minimum; that office, though now unreservedly in its own hands, was not destined to stem, in any appreciable degree, the calamitous tide which was irresistibly encircling the Communal domains.

During the evening and night fresh fires were ignited in various streets in the eastern part of the city, mostly of private establishments. Hour by hour the retreat of the federates was marked by an ever-wider extension of the fire region, and the number of conflagrations now raging or smouldering in Paris must have numbered close upon two hundred, many of them being fires of tremendous magnitude. It might well seem from a little distance as if the entire city were in flames!

SIXTH DAY: FRIDAY, MAY 26TH, 1871.

IN the western portions of Paris, locomotion was become free. In the centre, wherever there were fires, efforts were made without cessation night or day to extinguish them. Timid people who had secluded themselves in cellars and out-of-the-way places whilst the fury of battle whirled around them, now emerged with relief from their concealment, to gaze thunderstruck on the scenes of death and desolation which everywhere met the eyes. Some of the dead bodies were being removed, though most still lay about. The latter in unfrequented streets were the prey of prowlers, men impervious to any gentle feelings, who thought only of purloining from the dead whatever article was of value.

Exit from and entrance to the city were still prohibited within the territory occupied by the Versaillais, save for military purposes. This was partly to prevent the operations of war being impeded, and partly to render impossible the escape of Communists. Notwithstanding this rigour, and an almost equal rigour on the part of the federates, numbers of Communist leaders, whether of the Commune or of the Comité Central, contrived to quit the city. One who had disguised himself and hoped to avoid discovery was Edouard Moreau, the leader of the Comité Central. He, however, was seized this day, taken before one of the Court-Martials instituted by the Versaillais for the summary trial of prisoners, tried, condemned, and speedily shot. Others, to aid them in their escape, set afloat rumours that they had been killed. Some Communists, fortunately for them, sadly for other poor individuals, were supposed to have been actually shot by the Versaillais. Near the Champs de Mars, a person was denounced by a crowd as being Billioray, and was instantly shot, despite his despairing denials of the statement. Afterwards it

was discovered that his name was Constant, and that he was a man who meddled not with politics. Another person was taken for Jules Vallès, and shot near St. Germain d'Auxerrois. Neither of these men were armed, and should at most have been arrested and not shot straightway. A third person, whose name was Vaillant, was thought to be the Communist of that name, and narrowly escaped being shot. He was sent on to Satory, near Versailles, to join the thousands of prisoners already there, and the mistake of identity was subsequently discovered.[1] It is to be feared that there were many such cases which have not come to light. Condemnations were hastily conceived and immediately executed. Even the federates and their chiefs, though they massacred innocent hostages, were more appreciative of human life than the Versaillais; *they* knew the value of the lives they were taking, whereas their enemy seemed now to be utterly oblivious to any extrinsic worth attaching to Communist existences. True, they had received provocation to the last degree—it had swallowed up in many of them the superficial finenesses of civilization, and had laid bare the reality of human brute-kinship.

An incident which occurred to-day in the Luxembourg quarter will further illustrate this. It shall be told almost word for word in the language of one of the principal actors in it, a Versaillais captain named Garcin—a man who needs no greater condemnation than that unwittingly supplied by himself. It will be remembered that the southern portion of Paris was at this date wholly conquered, and that there was therefore reasonable ground for some subsidence of passion.

One of the deputies sent by the district of the Seine to the National Assembly on February 8th was Millière, whose sympathies had ever been with the Commune, but whose active share in its doings was of the slightest description, not even extending to articles in the press, though he was a journalist. He was arrested in the house of his father-in-law, Rue d'Ulm, by two soldiers, at one of whom he fired his revolver. They brought him before Capt. Garcin, who, with a Versailles general,

[1] Larousse.

was in a restaurant in Rue Tournon. A great crowd, angry and vociferating, had accompanied Millière, and wished to lacerate him, but Capt. Garcin took care that the crowd did not effect its desires. Garcin asked, "Are you really Millière?" to which the person interpellated replied, "Yes, but do you not know that I am a deputy?" "It is possible," said Garcin, "though I believe you have lost your character of deputy."[1] Garcin then told Millière that the general's orders were he was to be shot. The following dialogue ensued:—Millière: "For what reason?" Garcin: "I know you only by name, but I have read articles of yours which have revolted me;[2] you are a viper, such as one treads under foot. You detest society."—"Oh, yes; I hate *this* society."—"Very well, it is going to remove you from its midst—you are about to be shot."—"It is summary justice, barbarous, cruel!"—"And all the cruelties you have committed, go they for nothing? Anyhow, since you admit yourself to be Millière, there is nothing else to do."

Garcin then gave orders for Millière to be taken to the steps of the Panthéon. This was done, Garcin accompanying. The latter informed Millière that the general's orders were that he was to be shot kneeling and asking pardon from Society for the ill he had done. Millière refused to kneel, whereupon Garcin repeated that such was the order, and not otherwise would it be carried out. Millière opened his vestments and exposed his chest to the firing party. "You are theatrical," said Garcin, "and wish people to talk of how you died; die tranquilly, that is of better worth." Millière replied, "I am free, in my own interest and in that of my cause, to do what I wish." He was again commanded to kneel, but would only do so when forced down by two men. He cried out, "Vive l'humanité!" and was about to utter a second cry when his body was riddled with balls and he fell dead on the Panthéon steps.[3] Later in the day Madame Millière was arrested and sent to Versailles a

[1] This was incorrect; Millière had never actually resigned his deputyship, though he had thought of so doing and had ceased to assist in the National Assembly deliberations.

[2] The reference here is undoubtedly to Millière's article in *Le Venguer* of Feb. 8th, see page 76.

[3] Larousse, quoting Captain Garcin's statement.

prisoner—for no other reason than that her husband had been shot.[1]

The operations of war undertaken to-day by the Versaillais for the first time followed the design of surrounding the federates. The latter were now in a somewhat circumscribed area, bounded by the fortifications on the east, the Bassin de la Villette and Canal de l'Ourcq on the north, the Canal St. Martin, Boulevard Richard Lenoir, and the Place de la Bastille on the west, and the Faubourg St. Antoine, Place du Trône,[2] and Cours de Vincennes on the south: a total superficies of about five square miles. Within this space the principal federate positions were the Place de la Bastille, Place du Trône, the Round point of Villette, Place Prince Eugène, the Buttes Chaumont, and the Père Lachaise, the two last-named places being formidable artillery strongholds, owing to the high ground thereat. The batteries of these hilly, and in the case of the Buttes Chaumont almost inaccessible, spots had not ceased to pour their venom of shot and shell over the conquered portions of the city, though the damage they accomplished was less than might have been expected from so continuous a bombardment.

The Place de la Bastille was the first object of the Versaillais' attack. It was found to be impenetrable on the western side, so massive were its defences, and so skilful its defenders, who fired not from behind their barricades, but from the windows of the houses. However, the Versaillais obtained, near the fortifications, access to the Vincennes railway, and marched along its line, despite a heavy fire directed upon them by the federates. This railway led right into the Place de la Bastille by means of the terminal station there, and the Government troops, supported by those which, the night before, had taken Mazas and the Lyons station, forced an entrance into the Place, and were thus able to attack the federates from behind. About the same time the western contingent, profiting by the disarray which this onslaught threw the federates into, crossed the barricades at the end of the Boulevard Beaumarchais, and seized several other barricades at the opposite side of the Place.[3] These operations

[1] Lefrançais, p. 352, quoting *Le Figaro* du 31 Août, 1871.

[2] Now Place de la Nation.

[3] Macmahon, p. 35.

were not completed without great slaughter—at the barricade Rue de Charenton alone, over a hundred bodies were subsequently counted—and the capture of large numbers of federates. Those of the defenders who could escape flew to the Place du Trône; whilst numerous fires bursting out from the Rue de la Roquette and from other houses in the vicinity attested the unimpaired vitality of the incendiarists.

The western contingent of the Versaillais, in the course of its duty above referred to, came across the body of the Marquis de Sigoyer, who had been missed from his battalion during the night. The dead officer was lying near to a burning house, close to the spot where he had fallen. The hands were charred and other portions of the body burnt, and the horrible impression was immediately conceived that Sigoyer had been soaked in petroleum and burned alive by the federates, on whose heads there was now no atrocity too great to be laid.[1] Proof of how the burns were caused cannot be adduced, for no one was witness of the occurrence, but the probability is strong that burning *débris* from the house near by had fallen upon and burnt the body.[2]

From the Place de la Bastille an advance was directed, at two in the afternoon, on the Place du Trône, where another formidable barricade was in existence, protected by outlying barricades and entrenched positions, which had first to be demolished by the Versaillais artillery, ere approach to the Place itself could be obtained. Proceeding by all the streets at their disposal, west, south, and east, and at the same time pushing forward along the line of fortifications, the Versailles troops finally, though not until the dark of evening arrived, drove the federates from the Place. They could not, however, occupy it, for it was soon swept by the federate batteries stationed near the 11th arrondissement mairie, and it remained untenable during the night.

[1] This impression was quickly expanded throughout Paris, and aroused intense indignation. The Communist denials of its accuracy were of course disbelieved. Maxime du Camp, whose version of Sigoyer's death and burns has been adopted in the text, to the exculpation of the federates from the odious charge of burning alive, certainly cannot be accused of any Communist sympathies.

[2] Du Camp, t. ii. pp. 247–249.

Further north, other divisions of the Versaillais had had equally tough work in hand. The federates, though being gradually conquered, fought stubbornly; when ousted from one position they rallied in another, and the process of concentration which the Versaillais tactics forced upon them served to maintain their numbers and their fury, notwithstanding their ever-diminishing territory. They were now being driven ever on to higher ground, and this gave them a great advantage over their adversaries and enabled them to hold out longer than they could otherwise have done. Their batteries on the Buttes Chaumont and Père Lachaise were to-day employed in firing on the northern portions of the Versailles army, which were continually within their sight and range—this artillery fire was no mean auxiliary to the federate defence. Incendiarism here, also, was not forgotten. The federates, defeated in various places around the Canal St. Martin and the Bassin de la Villette, relinquished not their hold on the immense warehouses, bonded stores, and sugar refinery that lined the water-sides, and some equally extensive workshops belonging to the Carriage Company of Paris, without setting fire to them. The last-named establishment contained enormous stores of provisions which had been laid up by the Government of the National Defence in anticipation of the siege, had remained there throughout the winter, notwithstanding the food famine which prevailed, and even to that moment had not been used—now they became a prey to the flames, and every atom was destroyed.[1] Also at the same place 732 carriages, quantities of tools, as well as the whole of the buildings, were devoured by the fire.[2] These conflagrations, lit at various periods of the day, all of them close together and seemingly one vast furnace, ranked amongst the greatest of the week, and at night lit up with an additional sea of flame the surrounding sky, making the hearts of the Parisians once more beat with violence and trepidation, for they knew not when these stupendous incendiarisms were to come to an end.

[1] Du Camp, t. i. p. 284, quoting the words of M. Ducoux, the President of the Administrative Council of the Carriage Company.

[2] *Ibid.*

The federates who had been engaged in producing one of these fires found their means of exit from the burning building blocked by the sudden approach of the Versaillais. Summary justice was meted out to them. Many were shot, others fell victims to the flames of their own ignition, and but few out of a total of one hundred and fifty escaped.[1]

The Versaillais, in this northern region, did not gain a great extent of ground, but they prepared the way for attacking, on the following day, the Buttes Chaumont, the height of which, and the artillery upon it, rendered it a position demanding the fresh energies of the morning rather than the wearied exertions of the night. Some of the federates, driven during the afternoon from their barricades in advance of the Buttes, fled further inwards, and arrived at the Belleville mairie and other places neighbouring thereto. There they had some influence on the course of events.

The Belleville mairie—20th arrondissement—was situated opposite the church of St. Jean Baptiste in the Rue de Paris.[2] It was somewhat north of the centre of the federate area at this moment, but was nevertheless surrounded by a friendly population and was beyond the range of the Versaillais, whose nearest position was about a mile distant, the formidable Buttes Chaumont intervening. Here the Communists were yet masters, hanging on to their political existence by the last thread, and still determined that their ruin should not be unavenged. Here perambulated, like caged brutes, the Committee of Public Safety, and various members of the Commune and of the Comité Central. The prisons of La Roquette were still in their power; they were some distance off, and there was no knowing how soon the Versaillais might take them. The decision arrived at the day before to transfer the hostages from these prisons to the Belleville mairie and church was not yet carried out. The hostages were numerous, but the federates available for escort were few; however, a company of about thirty-five federates, headed by Emile Gois, commonly called Grille d'Egout—a friend of Eudes and of Mégy—was got together and despatched

[1] De la Brugère, p. 251.

[2] Called now Rue de Belleville. The present mairie of the 20th arrondissement occupies a totally different site.

to La Grande Roquette, provided with a vague order signed by Ferré to the director of the prison, to deliver up to the escort as many hostages as it could bring.[1]

François, the governor of La Grande Roquette, received the order, and immediately gave instructions to the brigadier Ramain, and to an under brigadier named Picon, to fetch, from opposite wings of the prison, the priests, the gendarmes, and the sergents de ville; also four civilians whom Gois designated, and who were alleged to have been secret police agents under the Empire. Of these four, one was the Joseph Ruault whom Ferré had vainly called for at the Depôt on the 24th. The names of the other three were Dereste, Largillière, and Greff. Ramain called the civilians and the priests according to a list which François had given him. Eleven priests answered to their names: Olivaint, Caubert, De Bengy, Radigue, Tuffier, Rouchouze, Tardieu, Planchat, Sabatier, Benoist, Seigneret. These and the civilians made fifteen.

Picon called the gendarmes and the sergents de ville. According to his list, there were thirty-seven of the former and fifteen of the latter. These men were not of the simple docility of the priests; they were suspicious, and demanded to know for what purpose they were required, but their fears were allayed when Picon replied that there was no more bread in the prison, and that they were about to be taken to the Belleville mairie to receive food and be set at liberty.

In the grand hall the two parties of hostages met, forming in all sixty-seven persons. Too numerous, thought Gois, for his slender escort—they might rebel, and gain the upper hand. The fifteen sergents de ville were therefore sent back to their cells, and the total was reduced to fifty-two. The thirty-seven gendarmes or gardes de Paris included the thirty-six who had been brought before Rigault's juries d'accusation on the 19th, and by them declared to be hostages; the thirty-seventh had equally been brought before a jury d'accusation, but had been acquitted, notwithstanding which—probably by oversight or mistake, which were of frequent commission by Communal officials—he had been sent to La Roquette along with the

[1] Du Camp, t. i. p. 301. *Rapport d'ensemble*, p. 162.

others.[1] Another hostage, similarly transferred to La Roquette in error, was the priest Seigneret.

The fifty-two hostages were surrounded by the escort, and an exit was then made from the prison. A crowd of women and old men which had assembled outside the gates greeted them with sympathetic glances as they turned into the Rue de la Roquette and commenced to ascend its gradient. This unexpected compassion showed itself to such extent along the route taken by Gois, that he asked the commander of a federate battalion which defended a barricade in the Boulevard de Ménilmontant for extra men to increase the escort. The request was complied with, and a company of federates, officered by one Dalivoust, was added to the escort. Presently the attitude of the population through which the procession passed underwent a change: from kindliness or apathy, it became hostile. Stones began to be thrown at the hostages, insults and objurgations addressed to them, and from more than one voice, "Death to the calotins!" rang out. Always on rising ground, the bulk of the city lay behind and beneath them. At the market in the Rue de Puebla,[2] a mass of sightseers were gathered to gaze on the unprecedented view which Paris presented—fire, smoke-clouds, the roar of artillery, and the crackling of smaller arms combining to form a picture to the eye and ear of thrilling and fearful import. The escort, with its hostages, stopped also to witness the spectacle. Whilst they thus stood, they were joined by some of the federates previously alluded to, who had been driven from the outer Belleville barricades at the west of the Buttes Chaumont into the centre. These, perceiving the gendarmes and priests under escort, immediately exclaimed, "Deliver us the prisoners, and we will shoot them." The escort restarted its journey, and in a short while arrived before the Belleville mairie. Here Gabriel Ranvier stood waiting to receive it. The hostages were sent inside the building, and, as they passed, Ranvier said to them, "You have a quarter of an hour to make your wills, if you wish." Whilst the hostages were secluded for a few minutes from the attacks of the crowd, the latter increased in volume, as also in bloodthirstiness and gaiety.

[1] Du Camp, t. i. p. 235.

[2] Now Rue des Pyrénées.

The entire locality became aware of the hostages' presence, and imagined only that they were prisoners taken that day in battle, though, had their real character been known, it is doubtful whether any different treatment would have been accorded to them. In anticipation of the shooting process, a cortège was promptly elaborated under military and vagabond auspicies. A *vivandière*, dressed in the semi-masculine attire which was not uncommon amongst the federate female attendants, sword in hand, rode astride a horse, whilst clarions and drums arrived and ranked themselves behind her. Federates of all classes came from hidden places, women from their gossip, and children from their play, levity and vulgarity showing from nearly every countenance. What were they come for to see—a popinjay, a mountebank, or a carnival? Yea, a carnival, in the original signification of the word, with the substitution of human for bestial blood. Were not these women the descendants of those of '93 who stood at prison doors and hacked to pieces the unfortunate prisoners who, thinking to regain their liberty, emerged therefrom? At such moments there is no redeeming feature in them.

Not long had the crowd to wait for the reappearance of the hostages. The gendarmes and gardes de Paris came first, followed by the civilians and the priests. They were surrounded by federates, who were pressed on all sides by the unmilitary element of the crowd, of which each unit was eager to deal his blow and launch his insult upon the unhappy hostages. Ranvier's parting words to Emile Gois were instructions to shoot all the hostages at the ramparts. Away went the procession up the Rue de Paris, headed by the vivacious equestrienne and other women, enlivened by the clarion notes and drum rolls, whilst sundry individuals danced, sang, and exhibited every indication of festivity and hilarity. The pace was brisk; the hostages perspired under it. This was the least of their sufferings: the throwing of stones, blows from guns and sticks, coarse ribaldry, and merciless talk of the fate in store for them, were agonies of greater account.

Arrived at the top of the Rue Haxo, the head of the procession stopped, whilst the tail of it continued to move on, resulting in a compression of the crowd, and the destruction of

whatever order had up to then been preserved. The stoppage was actuated by indecision as to the precise spot to which to convey the hostages. Finally the staff office of the military section in which they found themselves was fixed upon, and thither the procession, now become tumultuous and passionate, turned. Their destination was situated No. 83, De la Rue Haxo, and went generally by the name of "city of Vincennes"; it was a customary meeting-house for federate officers and men, and at this moment several such were within it, including two members of the Commune—Oudet, lying wounded in a room, and Varlin, whose bravery, energy, and activity during these bloody days had been incessant. The principal federate officer now left in the Communal service was a member of the Comité Central named Hippolyte Parent, who called himself Delegate of War—he also was there. Others, notably Victor Benot, who had helped to burn the Tuileries, were in the vicinity.

Onward came the rabble escort, pushing and maltreating the hostages, and preceded by the noise of its own ominous tumult. Arrived at the sectional office, the hostages, some of whose faces were covered with blood, were forced down an alley leading into a quadrangular garden ground, followed by the crowd, which clamoured incessantly for the deaths of its victims. Varlin, perhaps the most sincere and the most honourable of all the Communists, was affrighted at the spectacle, and at the terrible massacre which it foreboded. Passionately he threw himself before the hostages, as if to protect them, and cried out to Parent, "Men of the Comité Central, since you are the masters, show that you are not assassins; let not the Commune be dishonoured—save this people from itself, or else all is finished, and we are no more than convicts." Parent answered not; the blood-mad federates replied for him, contemptuously saying to Varlin, "Go, advocate; those men appertain to the justice of the people." Varlin despairingly tried again to speak, but he was not listened to, and some of his friends by force removed him from the enclosure. The hostages were pressed by the crowd against a wood barrier which separated them from a house that was in the first stages of erection—beyond the barrier, a wall, barely eighteen inches high; then an unfinished excavation for a cellar, then another wall, about twelve feet high. For

eight months this embryo structure had been left untouched, owing to the war; the cellar cavity had been meanwhile transformed into a place of ease for the neighbouring humanity.

After a few moments' hesitation, an impetus was given to the crowd by the sudden arrival of Victor Benot, who cried out, "To Death, to Death!" The crowd on the impulse pushed in unison, the wood barrier gave way under the pressure, and the hostages were precipitated into the space in front of the little wall. Here the *vivandière*—who had descended from her horse—struck the first death-blow at one of the hostages. So fair an example was a reproach to the males—these at once followed it by gun and revolver shots. Federates, perched on adjacent walls, shouting with all their might, fired on the hapless hostages; Hippolyte Parent from a balcony viewed the whole scene with nonchalance, hands in pockets and cigar in mouth; cries of "To Death!" resounded, and there were none to protest.

Massacre, pure and simple, was not sportive enough for these animals; they compelled the gendarmes to leap over the tiny wall and fired upon them, as sportsmen do upon birds, whilst they were in the air. One garde de Paris was not without a sarcastic politeness towards his persecutors even in the face of death; this man saluted the murderous crowd and said to it, "Gentlemen, long live the Emperor!" The next instant he fell dead upon a heap of bodies, dead and dying. Some priests who were ordered to leap the wall refused, whereupon a federate, laying down his gun, seized each of the recalcitrants and lifted them over the wall, amid the applause of the crowd; they were then shot. The last priest resisted this proceeding; he seized tight hold of the federate, and they both fell to the ground—the murderers were too impatient to wait until their comrade disentangled himself, and he was shot along with the priest. The last of the fifty-two hostages remaining unshot had fainted from the awful strain upon his nerves; he was lifted on top of the heap of the massacred, and a general volley finished him also.

The hostages were not all dead; movements in the heap showed the existence of life somewhere. Two federates and a woman commenced then to trample on the bodies and to fire, at random, shots into them. Still, movements underneath the top

layer of bodies told of vitality unquenched. Then a federate cried out, "The bayonet!" and immediately bayonet thrusts in superabundance were sent into every body until life was unquestionably extinct from all. This butchery was almost beyond conception in its horrible excess of means for the end desired. One of the bodies had received sixty-nine shots, another seventy-two bayonet thrusts; all were pierced and shot to a frightful degree.

The next day the dead bodies were rifled of their belongings, and were then thrown into the afore-mentioned cellar cavity, regardless of the excrement therein contained.[1]

[1] Du Camp, t. i. pp. 301–316. *Rapport d'ensemble*, pp. 162–166. 6me Conseil de Guerre, 12th–21st March, 1872. Larousse.

There is a conflict betwixt these authorities in regard to the number of hostages included in the above massacre. In the 6me Conseil de Guerre proceedings, the commissary of the Government stated that forty-seven hostages had been extracted from La Roquette and forty-seven bodies recovered. The *Rapport d'ensemble* agrees with this number on p. 162, but on p. 166 it gives a full list of the names of the victims, and these make a total of forty-eight. Larousse, who was in Paris at this period, and who, as a collater of facts, is probably without equal, says that the number of hostages killed was fifty; but he parenthetically adds that the official report states forty-eight, by which he evidently meant the list of forty-eight names above referred to. Du Camp alone makes the number fifty-two, and I have adopted his version; not that I wish to make the case against the Communists as black as possible, for my only desire is to get at the facts, whatever they may be—but because Du Camp wrote a few years after the other authorities, and in all probability was in possession of further information than they. Moreover, Du Camp is, as a rule, most precise and reliable. In scores of instances I have found him confirmed and corroborated, and in very few have I had occasion seriously to question his accuracy. On each of these occasions I have expressed my doubts in this work—the reader may therefore judge for himself how few and what they are.

Du Camp gives presumably a full list of the fifty-two hostages, but unfortunately he also has erred somehow, and there are only fifty-one names. However, in the list of forty-eight names in the *Rapport d'ensemble*, there is one—Weiss—which Du Camp has not got; by adding it, the list of fifty-two names is made complete. Thus constituted, it is as follows:—

Gardes de Paris and gendarmes: Bermont, Breton, Brancherdini, Bodin, Bélamy, Carlotti, Chapuis, Cousin, Colombani, Coudeville, Ducros, Dupré, Doublet, Fischer, Fourés, Geanty, Garodet, Keller, Mananni, Marchetti, Marguerite, Marty, Mouillé, Mougenot, Millotte, Poirot, Paul, Pons, Pauly, Pourteau, Riolland, Valder, Valette, Villemin, Weiss, Lacoze, Blanchon = thirty-seven. Add four civilians and eleven priests, as given in the text, and the total of fifty-two is made up. The spelling of the forty-eight names

Of sheer indifference to human life and insensibility to suffering, the latter even more callous than the former, this massacre of the fifty-two hostages is one of the most glaring exhibitions in civilized history. These murderers were men and women who in ordinary times were *civilized*; civil, polite, may be not brutal, having parents and being themselves parents, with more or less of affection passing from and to them; see what they are capable of in extraordinary times! We also, being human and civilized, are essentially similar to them: the cause of Excess is Licence, and Licence is often paraded under the name of Liberty, of which it is a barbarous augmentation; wherefore, slacken not the reins of government, nor suffer Authority to be slighted; self-control is efficacious only so long and so far as there is a superior outer control upon us.

given in the *Rapport d'ensemble* is here adopted; in many instances Du Camp's spelling is different, though not sufficiently so to prevent the names being identifiable with those given above.

SEVENTH DAY: SATURDAY, MAY 27TH, 1871.

THE Versailles army made strenuous efforts to-day to complete their task and end the combat, but they were not able to do so, notwithstanding that the ground occupied by the federates was now very limited and that they were hemmed in on all sides. On three sides were the Versaillais; on the fourth, beyond the fortifications, was the German army of occupation, which resolutely arrested all fugitives and handed them over to the French authorities. The difficulties the Versaillais had to encounter were become intensified; barricades were multiplied with marvellous rapidity, every street possessed one, many streets several, and all were to be taken separately and partly demolished to permit the passage of the troops. In addition to this, the federates, who never dreamt of surrendering *en bloc*, fought furiously, sometimes to their disadvantage, as when they fired in such quick succession as to be unable to aim with accuracy. The tenacity with which they contested every inch of ground maintained at fever-height the anger of the Versaillais, and the battle became in its last hours even more bloody and relentless than before. The streets leading to Belleville, where this day the combat chiefly raged, were strewn with the slaughtered ones, blood flowed in rivulets, and evidences of carnage and conflict were seen on almost every house and at every step.

The Buttes Chaumont formed the principal object of attack. On the north-west face those heights were practically insurmountable, therefore the plan arranged was to take them from behind and in front at the same moment. To get the troops into the necessary positions for carrying out this plan, much fighting had to be encountered and numberless barricades taken, and it was not before six o'clock at night that these preliminary operations were completed. During this time the artillery on top of the

Buttes had suffered severely from the Versaillais artillery on the heights of Montmartre, which for three days past had energetically combatted its rival of the Buttes Chaumont. To-day, in addition, a cannon and a mitrailleuse were got to play upon the Buttes Chaumont from the fortifications behind them and almost in a line with the fire from Montmartre; thus, the federates had to endure two opposite fires at once. At six o'clock the signal to charge was sounded, and the Versaillais, from west, north, and east, rushed to the encounter and made themselves in very short time masters of the Buttes, seizing also a great quantity of ammunition and of guns.[1]

From the southern line occupied by them, the Versaillais advanced northwards along the ramparts as far as the Porte de Bagnolet to the cemetery of the Père Lachaise, which they occupied,[2] and up the Rue Puebla, to the mairie of the 20th arrondissement, which they also took. The federate leaders had already retreated from this refuge to the Rue Haxo, where they were still in strong force.

The bulk of the Communists at the end of the day were

[1] Macmahon, pp. 37–40.

[2] It appears almost impossible to determine the precise character which the re-occupation of the Père Lachaise took. Communist writers invariably represent it as a most terrible struggle, thousands of federates being slain within the cemetery. This view, after allowing for exaggeration, is not inconsistent with the official report of Marshal Macmahon, which merely states, p. 40, "A battalion of the 1st regiment of marine infantry advanced against a barricade which inconvenienced it and went as far as the Père Lachaise, where it encountered an energetic defence; but it was sustained by two battalions of its brigade and by a regiment of the Faron division, and thus maintained itself in and became master of the cemetery." On the other hand, Maxime du Camp declares (t. i. pp. 338–343) there was no battle at all inside the cemetery, that the place was occupied at first by merely five men, who explored it and found it vacated, excepting a few federates, who fled at the first shots fired at them; that these five men were subsequently reinforced by nine, which fourteen occupied the cemetery until eight at night, when they were joined by three companies of another regiment. The Versaillais troops engaged in this work, according to Du Camp, would be less than 400; according to Macmahon, they would number over 3,000. It is impossible to reconcile the two accounts, and unfortunately there are no other authorities of equal weight to appeal to. Moreover, not one of the authorities, Communist or other, was present at the Père Lachaise at the time, and therefore all accounts are equally dependent upon second-hand testimony.

driven into a territory not larger than a circle a mile in diameter. Outside that circle one or two groups of Communists were still found defending barricades which the Versaillais had hitherto been unable to take. Of these latter positions the chief were at the mairie of the 11th arrondissement and in the Faubourg du Temple.

The federates still held possession of the two prisons of La Roquette. During the day Ferré had arrived at La Grande Roquette, and had evidently wished to remove more of the hostages. Two of the prison attendants, indignant at the fate which had befallen the hostages extracted the preceding day, determined, if possible, to prevent a recurrence of such a massacre. They counselled the hostages and the criminals to barricade their respective divisions, to refuse to answer if they were called, to resist to the last extremity any attempt at force, for in these measures alone lay any hope of safety. These attendants, by name Bourguignon and Pinet, also concealed the keys which opened the iron doors of the prison sections, and thus put an additional obstacle in the way of withdrawing the hostages. The prisoners carried out these counsels, and when François, the governor, and Ramain went to bring the hostages from their cells, they found it impossible to get to them.

Ferré was incensed at this unlooked-for revolt, but left to Ramain the task of surmounting it, and occupied himself in superintending the removal of the soldier prisoners from the Petite Roquette to the church of St. Jean Baptiste, in furtherance of the plan previously decided upon, by which to force from the Versaillais terms of clemency. This transference, affecting over 1,400 men, was carried out without hindrance during the afternoon. It was at night when the Belleville mairie, opposite the church, was seized by the Versaillais, and from that moment the soldiers enclosed within the church were freed from any further danger.

Having completed the removal of the soldiers, Ferré returned to La Grande Roquette to see about the hostages. Ramain had not been able to secure them, neither by coaxing, promises, intimidation, nor even an attempt at setting fire to the barricaded sections, which fortunately resulted in nothing worse than an unpleasant smokiness. Ferré contrived a method more

original. He sent to the real criminals and promised them their liberty if they would cry, "Vive la Commune!" These convicts, possessing no settled principles, eagerly complied with so trifling a request, and Ferré was as good as his word. They were, however, required, in return, to assist the federates who guarded the prison in overcoming the resistance and the improvised defences of the hostages. For this purpose they united with the federates in the front part of the building, where also were Ferré and François. The cemetery of the Père Lachaise was close by, and thither the Versaillais soldiers were approaching on various sides at that moment. Suddenly a cry from the prison crowd was heard, "There are the Versaillais!" and immediately, criminals, federates, chiefs, all fled, this way and that, each anxious to save himself and forgetful of all else.

The prison was free, but the Versaillais were not yet marching to it. Some of the hostages, who had perceived, without quite understanding, the flight of their keepers, presently emerged from their cells and made for the entrance, shouting to those who still remained shut up that they were free and should make their escape. These replied, "No—come back, you will be killed outside." The advice was disregarded, and the hostages went out.[1]

Four of these were the archdeacon of Paris, Monseigneur Surat; M. Bécourt, a priest; M. Houillon, a missionary, and a Government employé named Chaulieu. They went together along the deserted Rue de la Roquette into the Rue des Boulets, in order to gain the Boulevard Prince Eugène. Arrived near the Rue de Charonne, they were stopped by a party of federates, who asked who and what they were. Monseigneur Surat innocently revealed that he was a priest and had come from La Roquette. Thereupon the four were reconducted back as far as the exterior wall of the prison La Petite Roquette, at which point a young and pleasant-faced girl, holding a poignard in her hand, amused herself by pressing its point against the archdeacon's breast, causing him to recoil, whilst she continued to advance. Then this girl seized her revolver and fired it into the prelate's right temple, whence the ball crushed through the

[1] Du Camp, t. i. pp. 318–330.

eye-sockets and the nose, producing a horrible disfigurement; another shot was sent through the body below the heart. MM. Bécourt and Houillon were also shot at the same place; Chaulieu was fired at, but not struck—he ran off, was pursued, turned, seized the sword of one of his pursuers and with it gave three or four slashes, then was recaptured, taken back to where the bodies of his companions lay, and shot.[1]

These were the last hostages who suffered death at the hands of the Commune. Yet there are still deaths to record: the Versaillais, pitiless in *their* vengeance, were in the thick of massacre, as terrible, if not quite so cruel and barbarous, as any the Communists perpetrated. Lives of citizens were of no more worth at this juncture than the lives of dumb animals—perchance not of so much. It needed only a breath of suspicion, a denunciation, founded or unfounded, and the victim thereof was taken with brief ceremony to the human slaughter-house at the Lobau barracks, from whence he never came out alive. The Versaillais Court-Martial, sitting at the Chatelet Theatre, has perhaps the bloodiest reputation laid to its charge, though of it, as of the other Military Courts, there are no available statistics of condemnations or executions. There is, however, no doubt that its judgments were most relentless, and that scores or hundreds of persons, National Guards and others, were shot by its orders often upon the scantiest evidence. This was not the expiation that Thiers had declared would be enforced upon the Communists, a rigorous expiation, but proceeding "in the name of the law, by the law, with the law."[2] Neither was Thiers' complaint in regard to the death of Commandant Sigoyer, who he alleged had been shot "without regard to the laws of war"—even had it been substantially true—justifiable, for his own soldiers had exceeded both his wishes and their commander-in-chief's orders, and had been guilty of many excesses and unauthorized executions, which far surpassed the solitary instance of like nature wherein Sigoyer lost his life.

However unrealizable impartiality may be in the heat of a national struggle, it is not useless to point out to a later genera-

[1] 6me Conseil de Guerre, 20th April, 1872. Du Camp, t. vi. pp. 331–336. *Rapport d'ensemble*, p. 170.

[2] Thiers' speech in National Assembly, May 22nd.

tion of people the fact that the Versaillais and the Communists were alike implacable, revengeful, and cruel. In the former case these feelings showed themselves in somewhat more orderly and regular fashion than in the latter, but they nevertheless constituted an exhibition of exactly the same spirit, such indeed as it is only natural to expect from the same race of people.

A welcome indication of a return to the normal conditions of existence was seen in the southern portion of Paris this day, by a commencement being made to disarm the National Guards and the population generally—a needful measure which only M. Jules Favre's cowardice had prevented being accomplished in February. To him, more than to any other individual, remounts the responsibility of rendering possible the Commune.

Among the persons arrested—for arrests were constantly being made—was Tony Moilin, whose exploits in regard to the mairie of the 6th arrondissement were duly notified. Since that time he had returned to his former occupation of surgeon in the National Guard, and had not otherwise assisted the federates. Being now denounced by a neighbour, he was taken before the Court-Martial sitting at the Luxembourg, and condemned to death, but respited for twelve hours at his urgent request, in order that he might marry a woman with whom he lived, and who was far gone in pregnancy.

Eighth Day: Sunday, May 28th, 1871.

It was two o'clock in the morning when Moilin was married. The official who performed the ceremony was Herisson, the mayor, to oust whom on March 22nd from the mairie had been Moilin's task. The latter, like a brave fellow, thought not of his own impending death, but sought only to console the unhappy wife who so soon was to become a widow. At five o'clock, the time of respite expired, and Moilin was shot.

It was precisely at the same hour that the Versaillais army on the other side of the river took possession of the prison La Roquette, and finally liberated the hostages. Verig, who was known to reside in the neighbourhood, was sent for and promptly shot; the other participators in the massacres of hostages could not be found at that moment.

The entire troops in the region occupied by the Communists were on foot at daybreak, anxious to at last complete their labours. The Rue Haxo was early in their possession, and with it 2,000 prisoners and a considerable quantity of artillery. The Communist leaders, who had retreated to this part as to a last refuge, were gone—scattered in all directions, most of them to seek places of concealment. Jourde and Varlin wandered the streets of Paris all night and all day. Jourde had dispensed his last money to the federates on the preceding day. Varlin's share in this final disbursement was about £12, which had had to be forced upon him, for he said he had no longer need of money: he wished to die.

Varlin made no effort to conceal nor to disguise himself; the failure of the Commune, by which he had so greatly hoped to emancipate the workmen from their burdens, had stricken from his soul whatever worth life might have had. Aimless, friendless, hopeless, footsore and weary, mind and body heavy with

needed sleep, yet powerless amidst distracting thought to rest, he at last, in the broad light of midday, in a thronged square—Montholon—where Versaillais patrols and soldiers were on every side, sat down, heedless of whatever consequences might accrue to him.

After having been seated for some time, a priest passed him, stood and gazed intently an instant upon him, then went to a Versaillais officer, of whom there were plenty about, and informed him that Varlin the Communist was there. Varlin was at once arrested. This officer had not authority to deal with any member of the Commune, and therefore conducted Varlin, under escort, to the general's quarters, which chanced to be on the hill Montmartre. As they approached the hill, crowds of women and children gathered around the escort, and began to insult the prisoner. His identity was known, for Varlin, when interrogated, proudly declared his name. Were these the same inhabitants of Montmartre who, two months before, nonplussed and vanquished the regular troops, and, later in the same day, hounded on to their deaths Generals Thomas and Lecomte? It is surely *blood* they seek—whose, it matters not. Cries of "Kill him!" were heard; stones and dirt were thrown upon him. It became difficult for the small escort to protect their prisoner, who, however, was calm and firm, though pale. Anathemas, false charges, and base threats continued to be hurled into his ears as the mount was ascended. Having reached the top, they entered the Rue des Rosiers—yea, it is the crowd's wish that Varlin should be killed even where the two generals were—this bloodthirsty populace! He was taken into the general's quarters, submitted to a brief inquiry, and ordered to be shot, whereupon the frenzied people demanded that he should be first promenaded round the Butte. That happily was denied them; Varlin was taken to the topmost point of the hill and then shot, his courage and passivity being markedly distinct to the end. Thus died one more of those members of the Commune whose destiny it was to receive their death-wounds during these dread eight days of May; there were only four of them—Rigault, Delescluze, Vermorel, Varlin; the last-named being, in honour, modesty, and sincerity, the noblest, not only of these four, but of the entire Commune.

During the morning, whilst the final struggles were proceeding at various points betwixt Versaillais and federates, ever to the advantage of the former, some wholesale massacres were committed by the victorious party in the cemetery of Père Lachaise and in the prison of La Petite Roquette. One hundred and forty-eight federate prisoners, who had been confined in Mazas, were taken thence to the cemetery, and there shot in batches of ten at a time; at the Petite Roquette, even a larger number perished similarly, two hundred and twenty-seven there being shot.[1] Where, in these instances, enters the law—civil, not military law—to which Thiers referred so distinctly? We are beyond the fever-heat of battle, in this Sunday—beyond the least vestige of uncertainty as to the ultimate end of the fight: there is no need for such terrible reprisals, not the shadow of an excuse or palliation for them; they remain, and shall ever remain, an indelible stigma upon the conduct of the Versaillais army, a stigma which affects its officers from the highest rank to the lowest. These frightful and almost cold-blooded massacres at last aroused the Government from its indifference, and measures were taken to put a stop to them, but their complete cessation was not arrived at without trouble.[2]

By three o'clock in the afternoon, every federate position in Paris was taken and the whole city was possessed by the Versaillais. In a house in the Rue St. Maur, the body of Augustin Ranvier, governor of Ste. Pélagie prison, and brother to Gabriel Ranvier, had been found, suspended by the neck. He had committed suicide in order to avoid being shot. The last barricade taken was that of the Faubourg du Temple and the Rue de la Fontaine au Roi, at which about sixty federates, headed by a member of the Comité Central named Piat, seeing the hopeless nature of the struggle, surrendered themselves.

Marshal Macmahon notified the completion of his task to the Parisian public in a proclamation notable for brevity and the absence of the usual French bombastic rhodomontade—let it be here given *in extenso*, in appreciation of these singular qualities.

[1] Henri Martin's *Histoire de France*, pp. 417, 418. Du Camp, t. ii. p. 421.
[2] Martin, *ibid.*

"RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE.

"INHABITANTS OF PARIS,—

"The army of France is come to save you. Paris is freed. Our soldiers have carried, at 4 o'clock, the last positions occupied by the insurgents.

"To-day the struggle is terminated; order, labour, and security begin anew.

"The Marshal of France, Commander-in-Chief,

"DE MACMAHON,

"DUKE OF MAGENTA.

"HEADQUARTERS, *28th May*, 1871."

The following day, May 29th, the last Communal position fell into the hands of the Government troops. This was the fort of Vincennes, which, by virtue of its situation, had been wholly passive during the eight weeks' struggle. It surrendered after a vain and unpatriotic endeavour on the part of its commander to induce the Germans to occupy the fort and to distribute passports to enable its officers to quit France under German protection. Such was the final act of the last vestige of authority left of the Commune—it forms one more proof of the absolute falsehood of the statement which the Comité Central, prior to March 18th, promulgated so assiduously that its action and existence were due to and directed against the foreign "barbarians" who had conquered their country. The Commune might well proclaim in itself the Universal Republic, for it was without any feeling of national pride or honour. Only the dumb have a universal language, and only the outcasts—actual or prospective—of society can own a universal republic.

CONCLUSION.

THE Commune, borne into existence by a current of supposed patriotism, which was only a cloak to cover the design of revolutionary reforms, nevertheless embodied in that design an idea which had vitality and which yet lives: the idea that the poor are deprived of their birthright by the selfish action of the rich. Some truth therein lies—say not how much or how little; it is a subject not to be treated in a single sentence. The Commune treated it with a fatal immaturity of thought; this, with its manifest incapacity to subjugate and to control its forces, with its inherent discords, its vanities, its follies, its deceits, struck it from the first moment of its corporate existence with an incurable disease, which would speedily have caused its destruction, even had not an external foe actually crushed out its life. It is now, after a two months' career, dead. Its remains merit a brief attention.

Of the state of Paris after the 28th May little need be said. The fires, great and small, lit during the five days May 23rd to 27th, amounted to the gigantic total of two hundred and seven, and the damage thereby occasioned to several millions of pounds value. In addition to these, many houses, churches, and other buildings were wholly or partially destroyed by the artillery fire and small arms. Not less than two hundred precincts come under this second category. Many of the burnt buildings smouldered for days after the Commune's expiry, whilst the streets were strewn with *débris* of all kinds—from the damaged buildings and from the barricades.

Dead bodies of federates also remained lying about for days ere they could all be buried. Hundreds of the burials were made *en masse*, and effected in any vacant space that was at hand, though these were only temporary interments, necessitated

by the foul odour that emanated from many of the putrefying carcases. The total number of the federates killed during the week, in battle and by summary process, will perhaps never be known with accuracy. The lowest computation fixes it at 6,500,[1] but there is much reason to believe that this figure is greatly inadequate. From ten to twenty thousand more probably covers the total. The Versaillais losses, during the entire period of the Communal war, consisted of 877 killed, 6,454 wounded, and 183 missing.[2] The disparity between the Versaillais and the Communist fatalities is due partly, of course, to the greater skill, discipline, and precision of the regular soldiers, but it also points emphatically in the direction of the wholesale massacres which blasts the reputation of the victorious forces. Had the Germans been guilty of one-tenth or one-twentieth the summary executions against the French which the Versaillais were guilty of against the Communists, they would have been by united Gallic opinion denounced in the most indignant and outraged language. As it was, notwithstanding the clemency and the consideration shown almost everywhere by the Prussians for the prisoners they took, the French writers called them barbarians, and stigmatised them by opprobrious terms. The real barbarians were the French themselves. He who permits anger to blind his eyes and defeat his reason is always the first to be the actual perpetrator of that which his blindness and prejudice falsely imagined to exist.

Long after the struggle had terminated, arrests of federates and others continued to be made. Domiciliary searches, denunciations, and the ever-widening knowledge of the Versailles authorities as to individual participations in the insurrection, contributed to bring within the power of the law persons who for months and even years had escaped its attentions. However, with slight and, numerically, unimportant exceptions, the whole of the prisoners were taken within a period of ten months after the end of May, 1871; these numbered 38,578.[3]

The bulk of this huge total was taken during and immediately after the last week in May; the treatment accorded to it, after

[1] M. Du Camp, t. ii. p. 426.
[2] Macmahon, p. 44.
[3] *Rapport d'ensemble*, p. 262.

making all reasonable allowances, was inconsiderate to an extreme degree. The camp at Satory, near Versailles, to which in the first instance the prisoners were taken, had no proper accommodation for so large a number. Prisoners were hoarded together in masses, overshadowed not only by armed men, but by guns and mitrailleuses. The slightest sign of mutiny was quelled by death; subordination and obedience were enforced with the severest rigour, whilst humanitarian notions were completely disregarded. When, in the month of June, batches of prisoners were removed from Satory to pontoons in various ports, the removal was effected with similar brutality of method; in fact, these human beings were treated even worse than cattle would have been.

Out of the total of 38,578 prisoners, 36,309 were subjected to a more or less rigorous examination, and all the particulars of their respective cases were classified and arranged by military officers deputed to this duty.[1] The remaining 2,269 are thus accounted for: 1,090 were liberated after a simple questioning; 967 died before their cases could be inquired into; 212 were transferred to the civil authorities. Of these 2,269, 1,957 were men, 235 women, and 77 classified as children—presumably boys.[2]

The 36,309 prisoners are set out in all manner of statistical ways in the official report presented to the National Assembly in 1875, which comprised all proceedings up to the end of 1874. The periods, or method, of their arrest are divided into five categories, viz.:—

Before the entry of the troops into Paris .	3,224
During the eight days' struggle in Paris .	18,756
Fugitives handed over by the Prussians . .	625
After the termination of the struggle . .	13,399
In the provinces	305
	36,309[3]

[1] *Le Rapport d'ensemble*, p. 297, etc.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 262.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 261.

They are further classified as follows :—

Persons holding official positions in the Commune	438
National Guards of 16 years of age and upwards	29,409
„ „ under 16 years . . .	93
Persons, not National Guards, who had participated in the insurrection. (This category includes the irregular bands of men alluded to on page 195)	5,105
Women of 16 years age and upwards . .	819
Girls under 16 years	4
Boys „ 16 „ unattached to the National Guards	441
	36,309[1]

Of this total, 7,460 had, prior to the Commune, suffered punishments for crimes or had been under police surveillance. There were 1,725 foreigners amongst those arrested; they included 27 Englishmen, 17 Americans, and 81 Germans; there were much larger proportions of Belgians, Italians, Swiss, Dutch, and Poles.[2]

After an average detention of five months, 23,727 of the prisoners were liberated on an ordnance of *non-lieu*, or no charge.[3] The remainding 12,582 were to await trial. The two Military Courts in active existence at the end of May, 1871, were totally inadequate to cope with such a quantity of accused persons, and fresh Military Courts, until twenty-six were in operation, were rapidly created. Contemporaneously, a second Court of Revision was appointed to assist the permanent one in adjudicating upon such sentences as might be appealed against. Furthermore, a Commission of Pardons was nominated by the National Assembly on the 10th July, 1871, for the purpose of generally reviewing cases that might be brought before it, with a view of exercising, in the name of the nation, the prerogative of pardon.[4] This Commission was the outcome of a widespread feeling in France that the military authorities had acted with

[1] *Le Rapport d'ensemble*, pp. 256–259. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 263. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 297.

unnecessary harshness, and that, having exterminated the Commune, clemency might be introduced in regard to the final disposal of the prisoners.

The results of the trials of the 12,582 prisoners were that 2,445 were acquitted and 10,137 sentenced to various penalties, 95 being of death, and the others varying from perpetual hard labour or transportation to simple police surveillance.[1] The 10,137 condemned comprised 9,950 men, 132 women, 54 boys, and 1 girl under 16 years of age.[2]

Amongst the women were the five incendiarists who helped to prepare the Palace of the Legion of Honour for fire; also Louise Michel, the revolutionary publicist.

The main classes of offences charged against the condemned persons were three in number; the following is a comprehensive outline of the prisoners in each class:—

Offences against public order, *i.e.*, all relating to the purely political side of the insurrection . . .	Men	9,262
	Boys	51
	Women	59
	Girl	1
Offences against the person: murders or attempted murders, wounding, sequestrations, etc.	Men	393
	Boys	2
	Women	46
Offences against property: theft, pillage, damages, incendiarisms	Men	295
	Boy	1
	Women	27
		10,137[3]

The Councils of Revision received 2,962 applications for sentences to be reviewed; of this number 139 sentences were annulled.[4] Many others were reduced in severity, notably in regard to the condemnations to death, 72 of which were commuted.[5] The twenty-three persons executed up to the end of 1874 included the following:—

Ferré, member of the Commune, for complicity in assassin-

[1] *Le Rapport d'ensemble*, p. 297. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 315. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 315.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 302. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 297.

ation of the hostages and incendiarism; executed 28th November, 1871.

Phillipe, member of the Commune, for incendiarism; executed 22nd January, 1873.

Rossel, Delegate of War, for bearing arms against France; executed 28th November, 1871.

Sérizier and Boin, for assassinating the Dominicans of Arcueil; both executed 25th May, 1872.

Rouillac, for murder of the chemist Dubois; executed 6th July, 1872.

Herpin Lacroix and Lagrange, two federates, and Verdaguer, a sergeant of the 88th regiment de marche, for participation in the assassination of Generals Thomas and Lecomte; executed, the first-named on the 23rd February, and the others on the 22nd February, 1872.

Boudin, for Tuileries incendiarism; executed 25th May, 1872.

Chiefly for participation in the massacre of hostages in the Rue Haxo:—

Aubry,	executed	25th July, 1872.
Bénot,	„	22nd January, 1873.
Dalivoust,	„	27th July, 1872.
De Saint Omer,	„	25th July, 1872.
François	„	25th July, 1872.

For assassinating the hostages in La Roquette:—

Genton, executed 30th April, 1872.
Lolive, „ 18th September, 1872.

For assassination of Chaudey:—

Preau de Vedel, executed 19th March, 1872.

For murder of Comte de Beaufort:—

Denivelle, executed 19th September, 1872.

In addition to the two members of the Commune who were executed, and to Vermorel, who died at Versailles, other members fell into the hands of the French authorities—some of them during the eight days of May, as recorded; others within a few weeks afterwards, these being invariably either under disguise or in concealment; others, again, after a lapse of many months.

The following is a list of those arrested, excluding the three above-named :—

Ant. Arnaud, Assi, Amouroux, G. Arnold, Billioray, V. Clément, E. Clément, Courbet, Champy, A. Dupont, C. Dupont, Paschal Grousset, E. Gérardin, Géresme, Goupil, Jourde, Pillot, Régère, Rastoul, Trinquet, Urbain, Verdure. These all were sentenced to various penalties, varying from hard labour and transportation for life to three months' imprisonment ; two also had fines to pay. Ulysse Parent, Lefèvre, and Descamps were arrested, and placed upon trial ; they were, however, acquitted, their participation in the Commune having been of the slightest description. The other members of the démissionnaire class, excepting Ranc, were not subjected to any legal proceedings whatever. Ranc, though he remained in Paris for some time after the fall of the Commune, was not arrested, owing, it was said, to favouritism ; moreover, seeing that he had resigned his functions so early as April 6th, it was claimed for him that he stood in the same category as the other démissionnaires.

The principal feature in the sentences of the arrested members of the Commune was the rarity of the death penalty. All these members had been charged with attempting to change the form of government—and though the attempt had failed, it had occasioned the deaths of thousands of soldiers. The attempt was, before its close, if it had not originally been, an open rebellion against France : surely, it being attended with such dire consequences, it would have been only justice to have shot every member of the Commune that had remained therein after the first battle. The leniency of the treatment accorded to the leaders of the insurrection can only be accounted for by the mercilessness which the Versaillais had exhibited towards the simple federate during the heat of the final struggle. Communists had then been so pitilessly massacred *en bloc* that a revulsion of feeling had set in, testified to first by the creation of the Commission of Pardons, and subsequently by the sentences passed upon the arrested chiefs. The latter, practically, did not suffer legal punishment at all for the political attempt they had made to erect an independent Government at Paris. The charge was certainly included in the list of offences for which they were arraigned, but it was substantially the specific

deeds of incendiarism, pillage, and murder for which the severest sentences were passed.

Twelve months after the fall of the Commune, when the Military Courts and authorities generally were beginning to be relieved from the intense congestion of judicial business which had endured until then, attention began to be directed to the members of the Commune and others who had fled from France or had otherwise avoided arrest. The authorities possessed evidence incriminatory of all the principal fugitives, and, in accordance with French practice, proceedings were taken and sentences pronounced, notwithstanding the absence of the inculpated parties. This method of procedure took no account even of the death of several of the persons. Thus, trials were held in regard to Rigault, Delescluze, and Varlin, and sentences of death passed upon them. Tridon died at Brussels on 31st August, 1871, and appears to have escaped judicial pursuit. Beslay, in recognition of his services in preserving the Bank of France from spoliation, was assisted to leave the country, and also was not troubled by any legal process. There were, however, fifty living members of the Commune, who, not being procurable in person, were tried and sentenced by "contumacy," and the judges in these instances dealt out the useless penalty of death with flippancy, thirty-nine members being thus condemned, whilst the remaining eleven were sentenced to imprisonment for life. The following are the names of the fifty contumacious: Allix, Avrial, A. Arnould, Andrieu, Babick, Blanchet, Bergeret, Brunel, Cluseret, Chardon, Cournet, J. B. Clément, Clémence, Chalain, Demay, Durand, Dereure, Eudes, Frankel, Ch. Gérardin, Gambon, Henri Fortuné, Johannard, Lonclas, Longuet, Langevin, Lefrançais, Ledroyt, Martelet, Mortier, Meillet, Miot, Malon, Ostyn, Oudet, Pindy, Pottier, Protot, Puget, Parisel, Pyat, Ranvier, Ranc, Sicard, Serailler, Theisz, Vallès, Viard, Vésinier, Vaillant. Ranc was eventually proceeded against, not in respect of his participation in the Commune prior to April 6th, but because it was discovered that his resignation on that date was more pretence than reality, and that he had actively assisted in Communal work at least up to May 12th.[1] The whole of these contumacious members of the

[1] 3me Conseil de Guerre, October 13th, 1873.

Commune were in exile, mostly in England, Belgium, or Switzerland.

Of the members of the Comité Central forty-five were arrested within the period covered by the Official Report above alluded to, and thirty-nine remained contumacious,[1] the latter including most of the important persons. Among the former were Charles Lullier, Maxime Lisbonne, and Grêlier, all of whom were recipients of life sentences.[2]

Of those Communists who were neither members of the Commune nor of the Comité Central, Mégy, the friend of Eudes, requires mention, as one who eluded the vigilance of the Versaillais. Of Journalists falling under the same category, ten were arrested, and received sentences; they included Rochefort and his secretary, Mourot. Contumacious proceedings were taken against several others.

The Commission of Pardons terminated its labours at the end of 1875. It had received over 6,500 applications for clemency from prisoners sentenced by the various Military Courts. Somewhat less than half of these applicants received either a partial or total commutation of their respective punishments, so that the preceding statistics of judicial results become

[1] *Rapport d'ensemble*, pp. 254 and 342.

[2] The *Rapport d'ensemble* is very disappointing in its information in regard to the members of the Commune and Comité Central. Of the latter there is no complete list, and only a very few names, whilst the former are, in respect of their sentences, scattered through numerous pages. With the full knowledge of every case possessed by the French authorities, it would have been a simple task to have given a tabular list of the Commune and Comité Central, with the final results. So far as the Commune is concerned, the deficiency can be satisfactorily supplied; but it is difficult, perhaps impossible for any unofficial writer to give complete accounts of the members of the Comité Central who were arrested and of those that escaped. Moreover, the *Rapport d'ensemble* is strangely lacking in consistency. In the only place (p. 43), prior to the fall of the Commune, where it refers to the number of persons comprised within the Comité Central, it states they were thirty-nine. In the judicial results of the Military Courts, as given in the text, it makes them eighty-four, without there being the slightest explanation of the increased number. The latter total is doubtless correct; the former is manifestly incorrect, for, at the date (March 26th) at which it is given, there were at least sixty-nine members of the Comité Central (including those elected to the Commune), according to a list which I have drawn up from various sources.

considerably modified by these substantial acts of grace. On the other hand, the number of persons executed for offences in connection with the insurrection ultimately rose to twenty-six.[1]

After the fall of the Commune, various civil law suits were instituted, which referred more or less to it. Of these only one need be cited. It was an action for libel brought by M. Jules Favre, in 1871, against an individual whom he accused of having supplied Millière with the information which on February 8th had been published in *Le Vengeur* relative to Favre's private life. The latter was compelled, in open court, to confess that Millière's statements were correct, and that he, Favre, had been guilty of swearing gross falsehoods in official documents. Millière had been shot, in all probability, more because of the presumed scurrility of those statements than of anything else; they were true, and, in regard to a public man, their publication was justifiable. The whole affair inculcates once more the lesson that hasty retributions are swift and often irremediable injustices.

Ducatel, for having at the risk of his life apprised the Versailles troops of the deserted state of Passy, received the Cross of the Legion of Honour. A public subscription was also opened for his benefit in the columns of two newspapers; this brought him a sum of 111,000 francs. Finally, in January, 1872, he was given by the Government a minor appointment, which he held for some years.

The International Association of Workers, whose share in the agitation which preceded the Commune was so considerable, was in March, 1872, declared by the National Assembly to be an illegal combination, and to belong to it was made a penal offence.

Isolated arrests of federates and Communists continued to be made even so late as 1877, and sentences passed. By that time, however, other influences than those of repression and punishment were at work. The General Elections held in France in 1876 resulted in there being an imposing majority of Republican representatives in the National Assembly. Until then the existence of the Republic had been precarious; it was now

[1] Du Camp, t. i. p. 224.

assured. Repeated propositions had been previously made for a general amnesty for the Communist prisoners and exiles; but, in face of a monarchical chamber, nothing in this direction could be accomplished. However, with the advent of a republican majority the projected amnesty gained strength, and public opinion in France was gradually brought round to approve of it. In March, 1879, a partial amnesty was decreed; by it all the fugitives except 400, and all the prisoners except about 300, were restored to the full privileges of French citizenship. On the 12th July, 1880, a full amnesty was accorded, and the whole of the Communists, prisoners or exiles, could return to France and liberty. Most of them did so. By that time nearly the whole of the devastation wrought during the last days of the Commune had been repaired, and Paris had become the bright and gay city again; the Vendôme column was re-erected, and most of the public buildings where incendiarisms had occurred were rebuilt.

In the year at which the world has now arrived, very few of the personages are alive who have played a prominent part in these pages. It may interest the reader to know that Cluseret, Vaillant, Jourde, and Paschal Grousset are of these; they are all deputies in the existing French Chamber. Ranc and Rochefort continue their avocation of journalist. General Trochu, though little heard of, is also living.

INDEX

To Members of the Commune and Comité Central, and other principal personages.

A

Adam, A. 142 ; 144.

Allix, Jules ; mbr. of Com. 142 ; 144 ; 145 ; queries his election 153 ; vote *re* April elections 192 ; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207 ; arrested 223 ; escapes 352.

Amouroux ; mbr. of Com. 142 ; 145 ; sent to Marseilles 179 ; in Paris 189 ; vote *re* April elections 192 ; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207 ; arrested 251 ; sentenced 351.

Andrieu ; mbr. of Com. 192 ; 193 ; Head of Pub. Wks. dept. 197 ; *re* Vend. Col. 202 ; votes agnst. Com. Pub. Saf. 207 ; signs minority declar. 227 ; 234 ; escapes 352.

Arago, Emmanuel ; member of Gov. of Nat. Def. 18 ; 43 ; 46 ; 65 ; 74.

Arago, Etienne ; acclaimed Mayor of Paris 19 ; 21 ; 26 ; 29 ; 42, 43, 44 ; 53.

Arnaud, Antoine ; member of Comité Central 84 ; signs placard 88 ; signs C. C. proclamation 119 ; mission to Bank 127 ; mbr. of Com. 142 ; 145 ; 146 ; first secretary 156 ; Ex. Aff. Commiss. 157 ; vote *re* April elections 192 ; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207 ; mbr. of same 208 ; 218 ; 280 ; 303 ; 306 ; arrested and sentenced 351.

Arnold, G. ; Com. Cen. delegate to Com. Féd. Rép. 90 ; signs C. C. *affiche* 91, and proclamation 119 ; negotiates with mayors 136 ; signs agreement 137 ; 181 ; mbr. of Com. 193 ; Com. Contr. for War 198 ; signs minority declar. 227 ; 234 ; 303 ; 320 ; arrested and sentenced 351.

Arnould, Arthur ; mbr. of Com. 142 ; 145 ; Ex. Aff. Commiss. 157 ; vote *re* April elections 192 ; contends agnst. Rigault 200 ; votes agnst. Com. Pub. Saf. 207 ; signs minority declar. 227 ; 234 ; escapes 352.

Assi ; signs C. C. placard 88 ; Internationalist 89 ; signs C. C. documents 118, 119 ; mission to Bank 127 ; demands rupture of negotiations 134 ; mbr. of Com. 142 ; 145 ; 146 ; proclaims Commune 151 ; Police Commiss.

157 ; imprisoned 174 ; released 190, 191 ; arrested 251 ; sentenced 351.

d'Aurelle de Paladines, General ; 57 ; 58 ; 93 ; 97 ; 98.

Avrial ; Internationalist and Central Committee member, 25 ; signs C. C. manifesto 31 ; mbr. of Com. 142 ; 145 ; Lab. and Com. Commiss. 157 ; Exec. Com. 174 ; vote *re* April elections 192 ; Com. Control for War, 198 ; votes against Com. Pub. Saf. 207 ; in trouble 216 ; 217, 218 ; 220 ; signs minority declar. 227 ; 234 ; 303 ; 320 ; escapes 352.

B

Babick ; Internationalist and Central Committee member 25 ; signs placard Jany. 6th, 66 ; member of Comité Central 84 ; signs placard 88 ; 89 ; signs C. C. documents 118, 119 ; mbr. of Com. 142 ; 145 ; 146 ; Jud. Commiss. 157 ; vote *re* April elections 192 ; votes agnst. Com. Pub. Saf. 207 ; 320 ; escapes, 352.

Bank of France ; advances money to federates 126, 132, 158 ; menaced, 189 ; amount advanced up to April 30th 209 ; 214 ; attempt to force it, 221 ; 243 ; 263.

Baré ; 142 ; 144.

Bazaine, Marshal ; 10 ; 11 ; 39-41.

Beaufort, Comte de, 304.

Benot, Victor ; 282 ; 291 ; 331, 332 ; 350.

Bergeret ; Com. Cen. delegate to Com. Féd. Rép. 90 ; signs C. C. *affiche* 91 ; organizes federates, 104 ; joins Varlin 111 ; Chief of Legion and General 119 ; commands at Place Vendôme 130, 131 ; demands rupture of negociations 134 ; mbr. of Com. 143 ; 145 ; Exec. and Milit. Commiss. 157 ; 160 ; marches on Versailles 168-172 ; removed fr. command and Exec. 174 ; arrested 180 ; released 199 ; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207 ; 210 ; 226 ; 229, 230 ; 241 ; misappropriates, 265 ; 266 ; condemns four prisoners 268, 269 ; incendiarist 282 ; conceals himself, 290 ; 292 ; escapes 352.

Beslay ; Internationalist and Central Committee member 25 ; signs C. C. manifesto, 31 ; signs placard Jany. 6th, 66 ; 128 ; mbr. of Com. 142 ; 145 ; 146 ; opens first séance 152 ; Fin. Commiss. 157 ; delegate to Bank 158 ; 189, 190 ; vote *re* April elections 192 ; aids release of Mdlle. Darboy 201 ; accompanies freemasons 203 ; votes agnst. Com. Pub. Saf. 207 ; 222 ; signs minority declar. 227 ; assisted to escape 352.

Billioray ; signs C. C. placard 88, and documents 118, 119 ; mission to Bank 127 ; mbr. of Com. 142 ; 145 ; Pub. Wks. Commiss. 157 ; vote *re* April elections 192 ; 193 ; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207 ; mbr. of 2nd such Com. 219 ; its weakest mbr. 222 ; 226 ; a traitor 236 ; 253 ; 280 ; 320 ; arrested and sentenced 351.

Bisson, Count Raoul du ; head of

Com. Féd. Rép. 90; fires on demonstrators 131.
Blanc, Louis; 95; 138; 140.
Blanchet; signs C. C. placard 88; sounds the alarm 101; signs C. C. documents 118, 119; wounded 120; mbr. of Com. 142; 145; vote *re* April elections 192; 199; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207; arrested 213; escapes 315; escapes Vers. 352.
Blanqui; revolutionary journalist 4; instigates La Villette outbreak, 11; 25; 34; action on 31st Octr., 43, 44, 47–51; warrant for arrest of, 52; 62; aids revolutionary design, 68; sentenced to death by default and arrested 96; incites soldiers to desert 96; mbr. of Com. 143; 145; his release desired and refused 176, 177.
Boin, Louis, 311; 350.
Bonjean; 128; 162; 271; 306; 307.
Borme; chemical expert 186; 237; 299.
Boudin, Etienne; 268, 269; 282; 350.
Boursier; 181; 291.
Brelay; 142; 144.
Briosne; 193.
Brunel, Colonel; instigates revolutionary project and is arrested 72; released 87; enters H. de V. 114; negotiates with mayors 134–136; mbr. of Com. 142; 145; offends Comité Central 169; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207; defends P. de la Concorde 263; first incendiarist 276–278; 280; 303; wounded 316; escapes 352.

C

Central Committee of 20 arrondissements; origin 25; manifesto 31; 34; arranges demonstration 35; action on 31st Octr. 42, 43; demands sqrtie 61; supports Comité Central 128; members elected to Commune, 146, 193.
Chalain; mbr. of Com. 143; 145; Police Commiss. 157; escapes 352.
Champy; signs placard Jany. 6th, 66; mbr. of Com., 142; 145; 146; Food Commiss. 157; vote *re* April elections 192; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207; 241; 303; arrested and sentenced, 351.
Chanzy, General; 60; 119, 120; 137.
Chardon; signs C. C. manifesto 31; signs placard Jany. 6th, 66; mbr. of Com. 142; 145; 146; Milit. Commiss. 157; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207; 303; escapes 352.
Chaudey, Gustave; receives deputations 69; object of a false impression 70; arrested 187; is shot, 285, 286.
Chéron; 142; 144.
Chouteau; 105; 114.
Clémenceau; elected deputy 77; consulted by Favre 92; 97; reassures Lecomte 102; 105; visits scene of murders 110; 112; applicn. to C. C. 128; expelled from mairie 132; facilitates agreement with mayors 136.
Clémence; Internationalist and Central Committee member 25; signs placard, Jany. 6th, 66;

mbr. of Com. 142; 145; 146; vote *re* April elections 192; votes agnst. Com. Pub. Saf. 207; signs minority declar. 227; 234; escapes 352.

Clément, E.; mbr. of Com. 143; 145; Food Commiss. 157; vote *re* April elections 192; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207; arrested by Rigault 237; arrested by Vers. and sentenced 351.

Clément, J. B.; mbr. of Com. 143; 145; Pub. Wks. and Food Commiss. 157; votes agnst. Com. Pub. Saf. 207; 234; 303; 320; escapes, 352.

Clément, V.; mbr. of Com. 143; 145; Fin. Commiss. 157; vote *re* April elections 192; votes agnst. Com. Pub. Saf. 207; signs minority declar. 227; 234; arrested and sentenced 351.

Cluseret; letter to Varlin 6; amnestied 23; untractable 30; signs C. C. manifesto 31; quits Paris 38; 77; Delegate of War 174; orders *re* service 179; arrests Bergeret, 180; 181; 186; mbr. of Com. 192; 193; adverse comments upon 195; 197; 198; aids release of Mdlle. Darboy 201; re-occupies Fort Issy, 204; is imprisoned 205; 210; 211; released, 253; conceals himself 272; escapes 352.

Comité Central de la Garde Nationale; origin 84; orders seizure of cannons 86; counsels reserve 88; fusion with International 89; with Comité Féd. Rép. 90; replies to Picard 91; supreme in Paris 96; action on 18th March 100, 104, 110, 114, 115; its position 117; conduct from March 19th to 27th 118–141; members elected to Commune 145; dissolves and reforms 152; issues proclamation 159; sends deleg. to War dept. 181; 208; neglects to give information 212; encroaches on War administration 213; dilatory 215; maintains its position 219, 240; misgivings as to incendiarisms 296; usurps functions of War delegate 320, 331.

Coré; 126; 315.

Courbet, Gustave; advocates demolition of Vendôme Col. 184; mbr. of Com. 192; 193; revives Vend. Col. question 202; votes agnst. Com. Pub. Saf. 207; signs minority declar. 227; 229; 234; arrested and sentenced 351.

Cournet; implicated in Complot of Bombs 8; amnestied 23; deputy demissionaire 89; 114; mbr. of Com. 143; 145; 146; 154; Police Commiss. 157; Exec. Com. 174; head of Police dept. 200; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207; 222; 223; removed from Police 226; 243; lives sumptuously 265; 303; 306; 320; escapes, 352.

Courty; 81; 91.

Crémieux; 12; 20; 28.

Cresson; Prefect of Police 52; complains of powerlessness 62, 63; arrests Brunel and Piazza 72; his resignation and its withdrawal 74; refuses to set Delescluze at liberty 74; demands

stringent measures, which are refused 77.

D

Dalivoust; 329; 350.
Darboy, Archb.; 176; 271; 306, 307.
Darboy, Madmlle.; 176; 201.
Dassas, 93.
De Bouteiller, 143; 144.
Deguerry, Abbé; 176; 271; 306.
Delescluze, Charles, editor of *La Reveil*, 8; amnestied 23; 25; 34; action on 31st Octr., 43, 44, 47–51; not arrested 53; mayor of 19th arr. 54; condemns Government 65; suggests Flourens' release 68; demonstrates before H. de V. 69; arrested 70; his journal suppressed 71; elected deputy 77; released from prison 77; 112; mbr. of Com. 142, 143; 145; 146; 153; 154; Ex. Aff. Commiss. 157; Exec. Com. 174; vote *re* April elections 192; Com. Contr. for War 198; 199; 207; complains of Com. Centr. 218; Delegate of War 218; 219; critical notice of, 220; 226; accepts female assistance 233; 240; 253; 254; issues proclamation 262; 269; "Fire everywhere" 280; 303; tries to save Beaufort, 304; 310; seeks death 317–319; 351.
Demay; Internationalist and Central Committee member 25; signs C. C. manifesto, 31; signs placard Jany. 6th, 66; mbr. of Com. 142; 145; 146; Educ. Commiss. 157; vote *re* April elections 192; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207; escapes 352.
Dereure, implicated in "Complot of Bombs" 8; amnestied 23; Internationalist and Central Committee member 25; signs C. C. manifesto 31; dep. may. of arr. 54; mbr. of Com. 143; 145; Food Commiss. 157; vote *re* April elections 192; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207; 224; 303; 320; escapes 352.
Descamps; mbr. of Com. 142; 145; 351.
Desmarest 142; 144.
Dombrowski; commandant in West, 181; 186; 197, 198; 223; 224; 225; 246; 250; death of 274.
Dominicans, massacre of, 311, 312.
Dorian; 20; 50.
Dubail; 121; 136, 137.
Ducatel, 245–250; 254, 255; 258; 354.
Ducrot, General; foolish boast 59, 60; 66, 67.
Dupont, A.; mbr. of Com. 193; arrested and sentenced 351.
Dupont, Clovis; signs C. C. placard 88, and documents 118, 119; mbr. of Com. 142; 145; Lab. and Com. Commiss. 157; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207; arrested and sentenced 351.
Durand; mbr. of Com. 192; 193; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207; escapes 352.
Duval; Internationalist and Central Committee member 25; signs C. C. manifesto 31, and placard Jany. 6th, 66; chief of Legion 97; transacts Prefecture work 119; General of division 134; mbr. of Com. 142; 145; 146;

Exec. and Milit. Commiss. 157; 160; Marches on Versailles 168–173; removed from Command and Exec. 174; death 175.

E

Empress Eugénie, 10; 17.

Eudes, Emile; condemned to death 11; amnestied, 23; 47; arrested 52; released, 62; chief of Legion 97; self-installed at War Office 119; General of division, 134; mbr. of Com. 142; 145; 146; orders Allix out 153; Executive and Milit. Commissions 157; 160; Marches on Versailles 168–173; removed fr. command and Exec. 174; commander of forts 182; lives in state 202; 204; 210; 211; 216; mbr. of 2nd Com. Pub. Saf. 218; misappropriates 265; 266; 280; incendiarist 281; 292; 303; 305; 320; escapes 352.

F

Favre, Jules; republican leader 4; makes overtures to International Association 4; meets Trochu 17; member of Gov. of Nat. Def. 18; declaration *re* territory 26; seeks Bismarck 33; his complacency 41; approves immediate elections 43; held prisoner in H. de Ville 46; assents to compromise 50; repudiates it 52; 61; dissatisfied with Trochu 65; negotiates armistice 71–73; charged with falsehood, etc. 77; elected deputy, 77; reappointed minister by Thiers 79; alarmed, 92; petitioned by mayors, 113; 114; quits Paris 115; demands pardon from God and men 133; declar. accused by Com. 168; confesses to false swearing 354.

Federates; origin of the term 90.

Ferré, Theophilus; imprisoned 8; released, 23; signs C. C. manifesto 31; signs placard Jany. 6, 66; 128; mbr. of Com. 143; 145; 146; Police Commiss. 157; 177; 200; assist. prosecutor 201; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207; head of Police dept. 226; 229; 232; arrests Veysset 247; lives sumptuously, 265; 266; shoots Valliot, 269; wholesale order to shoot prisoners 272; 290; shoots Veysset, 298; incendiarist, 298, 299; 303; 305; order *re* Jecker 319; 320; order *re* Haxo massacre, 328; revolt of hostages 337, 338; executed, 349.

Ferry, E. 142; 144.

Ferry, Jules; member of Gov. of Nat. Def. 19; approves immediate elections, 43; escapes from H. de Ville, 46; commands Guards and forces entrance 49–51; repudiates the compromise 52; favours Delescluze 53; Mayor of Paris, 53; 79; message to Vinoy 85; reassured 93; quits H. de V. 113; reenters Paris, 259.

Floquet; 19; 36; 136.

Flourens, Gustave; flight from Paris, 7; amnestied 23; 24; calls

himself "Colonel" 30; signs C. C. manifesto 31; two demonstrations 35; 40; part in affair of 31st Octr. 42, 45–51; warrant for arrest of, 52; elected dep. may. of 20th arr. 54; arrested 62; released 68; captures and vacates mairie of 20th arr. 69; demonstrates before H. de V. 69; sentenced to death by default 96; incites soldiers to desert, 96; given command 119; mbr. of Com. 143; 145; 146; Milit. Commiss. 157; marches on Versailles 169–172; death 172.

Fortuné, Henri; signs placard Jany. 6th, 66; member of Comité Central, 84; signs C. C. *affiche* 91, and proclamation 119; mbr. of Com. 142; 145; 146; Food Commiss. 157; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207; 229; escapes, 352.

François, 271; 306; 319; 328; 337, 338; 350.

Frankel; Internationalist and Central Committee member, 25; signs C. C. manifesto 31; active Internationalist, 66; mbr. of Com. 142; 145; Lab. and Com. Commiss. 157; vote *re* April elections 192; 197; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207; signs minority declar. 227; 234; 303; 320; escapes, 352.

Fruneau; 142; 144; 158; 178.

G

Gaillard; signs Central Committee manifesto 31; constructs barricades 205.

Gallifet, Marquis de; salutary example 173.

Gambetta, Léon; declares Napoleonic dynasty at an end 16; member of Gov. of Nat. Def. 18; receives International deputation 24; leaves Paris for Tours 38; his egotistical policy 57; prescience 59; dissatisfied with Trochu, 65; denounces his colleagues and is dismissed 75.

Gambon; elected deputy 77; mbr. of Com., 142; 145; 146; 154; vote *re* April elections 192; votes for Com Pub. Saf. 207; mbr. of 2nd such Com. 218, 219; 280; 303; 306; escapes, 352.

Garibaldi 57; 60; 97.

Garibaldi, Menotti; 192; 193.

Garibaldi, Riciotti; 57.

Garnier-Pagès; member of Gov. of Nat. Defence 20; disapproves immediate elections 43; held prisoner in H. de Ville 46; assents to compromise 50.

Garreau; signs placard Jany. 6th, 66; gov. of Mazas 214; 271; 315.

Genton; signs Central Committee manifesto, 31; signs placard Jany. 6th, 66; presides over crt.-mrtl. *re* hostages 306; 319; executed, 350.

Gérardin, Charles; signs placard Jany. 6th, 66; mbr. of Com. 143; 145; 146; Police Commiss. 157; Ex. Aff. Commiss. 157; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207; mbr. of same, 208; explains its action 216; 217, 218;

flight with Rossel, 220; escapes, 352.
Gérardin, E.; Internationalist and Central Committee member 25; signs placard Jany. 6th, 66; 128; mbr. of Com. 142; 145; 146; Lab. and Com. Commiss. 157; votes against Com. Pub. Saf. 207; signs minority declar. 227; 295; 303; arrested and sentenced 351.
Géresme; signs C. C. placard 88, and documents, 118, 119; mbr. of Com. 142; 145; vote *re* April elections 192; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207; 226; 241; arrested and sentenced, 351.
Glais-Bizoin; 20; 28.
Gois, Emile; 327–330.
Goupil, Dr.; warrant for arrest of 52; mbr. of Com. 142; 144; Educ. Commiss. 157; 158; resigns 178; arrested and sentenced 351.
Grêlier, 251, 252; 353.
Grousset, Paschal; paper war with Prince Buonaparte; imprisoned 7; amnestied 23; *La Bouche de Fer* suspended, 95; 114; delegate to Foreign Office 119; replies to German commandant 130; mbr. of Com. 143; 145; questions Tirard 155; Ex. Aff. Commiss. 157; 179, 180; vote *re* April elections 192; 197; *re* Vend. Col. 203; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207; appeals to provinces, 231; 258; arrested and sentenced 351.

H

Héligon; organizes resistance to C. C. 121; his arrest attempted 131; dissents from agreement with C. C. 137.
Haxo, rue, massacre in; 327–333.

I

Ibos; 46.
International Association of Workers; origin, 2; Executives dissolved and imprisoned, 4; aims, 4, 5; delegation to Gov. of Nat. Def. 24; headquarters 25; 34; 82; declared illegal 354; mbrs. elected to Commune 145, 193.

J

Jecker; 187; 271; 319.
Johannard; Internationalist and Central Committee member 25; signs C. C. manifesto 31; signs placard Jany. 6th, 66; mbr. of Com. 192; 193; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207; 224; shoots boy 237; 320; escapes, 352.
Josselyn; 181.
Jourde, F.; signs C. C. placard 88; Internationalist 89; signs C. C. documents 118, 119; delegate to Finances 119; visits mayors 121; menaces Bank 126; mbr. of Com. 142; 145; questions Tirard 155; Fin. Commiss. 157; 189; vote *re* April elections 192; 197; votes agnst. Com. Pub. Saf. 207; makes financial statement, 209, 210; in trouble 216; 218; signs minority declar. 227; 234; 252; extinguishes fire 263; 265; 290; 303; 320; his last disbursement, 341; arrested and sentenced 351.

K

Kératry, Count ; 38 ; 57.
Koch, chemist ; 268 ; 269.

L

Lacord ; signs placard Jany. 6th, 66 ; member of Comité Central 84 ; signs C. C. *affiche* 91 ; 181.
Langevin ; Internationalist and Central Committee member, 25 ; signs C. C. manifesto, 31 ; mbr. of Com. 143 ; 144 ; 145 ; vote *re* April elections 192 ; votes agnst. Com. Pub. Saf. 207 ; escapes, 352.
Langlois, Col. ; 113–115.
Langourian, General ; 119, 120 ; 137.
Lasnier ; 224.
Lavalette ; releases Flourens from prison, 68 ; demands accusation of Govt. 76 ; signs C. C. placards, 88, 91, and documents 118, 119.
Lecomte, General ; attacks Montmartre 100–102 ; arrested 103 ; murdered 106, 107, 109.
Ledroyt ; mbr. of Com. 142 ; 145 ; Jud. Commiss. 157 ; vote *re* April elections 192 ; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207 ; 226 ; 241 ; escapes, 352.
Lefèvre, 142 ; 144 ; 157 ; 158 ; 178 ; 351.
Le Flô, General ; held prisoner in H. de Ville, 46 ; released, 49 ; intervenes on Delescluze's behalf 74 ; reappointed minister by Thiers 79 ; disbands Mobiles 94 ; 111.
Lefrançais ; Internationalist and Central Committee member 25 ; signs C. C. manifesto, 31 ; participates in 31st Oct. affair 42, 43, 45 ; arrested, 52 ; elected dep. may. of 20th arr. 54 ; released, 96 ; 128 ; 139 ; mbr. of Com. 142 ; 145 ; 146 ; draws up proclamation 156 ; Exec. Commiss. 157 ; prudent counsel 168 ; retires from Exec. 174 ; vote *re* April elections 192 ; votes against Com. Pub. Saf. 207 ; signs minority declar. 227 ; 248 ; 252 ; 272 ; 295 ; 303 ; 320 ; escapes 352.
Legros ; Madame, 224 ; 299.
Leroy, A. ; 142 ; 144 ; 157.
Lisbonne, Maxime ; 181 ; 317 ; 353.
Lockroy ; 114 ; 128 ; 136.
Loiseau-Pinson ; 142 ; 144 ; 157 ; 158.
Lolive 307 ; 350.
Lonclas ; mbr. of Com. 193 ; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207 ; 226 ; 241 ; escapes, 352.
Longuet ; Internationalist and Central Committee member 25 ; signs C. C. manifesto, 31 ; seizes Luxembourg, 119 ; mbr. of Com. 193 ; votes agnst. Com. Pub. Saf. 207 ; signs minority declar. 227 ; 303 ; escapes, 352.
Lullier, Charles ; untractable 30 ; signs C. C. placard 88 ; insurgent colonel 97 ; seizes public buildings 111 ; releases C. C. members 114 ; apptd. Comdt. of Nat. Gds. 115 ; signs C. C. documents 118, 119 ; occupies mairies 119 ; 125 ; is arrested

134; 160; 171; escapes, 174; arrested and sentenced 353.

M

Macmahon, Marshal; in Franco-Prussian War 10, 11, 14; quits Paris 119; in command of Versailles army 185; plan of attack 256; 257; 259; 292; notifies termination of struggle 343, 344.

Malon; Internationalist and Central Committee member 25; signs C. C. manifesto 31; dep. may. of arr. 54; signs placard Jany. 6th, 66; demonstrates before H. de V. 69; elected deputy 77; démissionaire 89; mbr. of Com. 143; 145; 146; 154; Lab. and Com. Commiss. 157; vote *re* April elections 192; votes agnst. Com. Pub. Saf. 207; 217; adheres to minority declar. 227; escapes, 352.

Marmottan; 143; 144.

Martelet; signs placard, Jany. 6th, 66; mbr. of Com. 142; 145; 146; Pub. Wks. Commiss. 157; vote *re* April elections 192; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207; 303; escapes, 352.

Mayer, Simon; captain of Château Rouge 104; delivers his prisoners 106; brings assistance too late 110; ascends Vendôme col. 229.

Mégy; implicated in "Complot of Bombs" 8; amnestied 23; gov. of Fort Issy, 202; abandons fort 204, 205; orders shooting of Thomé 267; incendiarist 281; assassinates hostages 306, 307; escapes, 353.

Meillet Léo; dep. may. of arr. 54; signs placard Jany. 6th, 66; arrests and protects Chanzy and Langourian 120; 132; mbr. of Com. 142; 145; 146; Jud. Commiss. 157; 162; vote *re* April elections 192; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207; mbr. of same 208; 224; arrests Dominicans, 239; 303; 310; escapes, 352.

Méline; 135; 136; 142; 144.

Michel, Louise; 184; 349.

Millière; signs Central Committee manifesto, 31; 34; participates in 31st Oct. affair 43, 48, 50, 51; warrant for arrest of, 52; elected dep. may. of 20th arr. 54; charges Favre with falsehood, etc. 76, 77; elected deputy, 77; is shot, 322, 323; post-mortem justification 354.

Miot, Jules; dep. may. of arr. 54; mbr. of Com. 143; 145; 146; vote *re* April elections 192; prop. for Com. of Pub. Safety, 206; votes for same 207; 229; Vend. col. speech 230; 320; escapes 352.

Moilin, Tony, implicated in "Complot of Bombs" 8; amnestied, 23; signs placard Jany. 6th, 66; deputed to 6th arr. mairie 124, 125; installed there 132; is shot 340, 341.

Montaut, de; 186.

Moreau, Ed.; member of Comité Central 86; visits mayors 121; 181; 213; civil delegate to war 219; 241; is shot 321.

Mortier; signs C. C. placard 88, and documents 118, 119; mbr. of Com. 142; 145; Pub. Wks. Commiss. 157; 303; 306; escapes 352.
Moussu, le; closes churches, etc., 191; attempts to force Bank, 222; invades Notre Dame des Vict. 233.
Murat; 124; 142; 144.

N

Napoleon III. 1; 8; 9; 14; 16.
Nast, 142; 144.

O

Oudet; Internationalist and Central Committee member, 25; signs C. C. manifesto, 31; dep. may. of arr. 54; signs placard, Jany. 6th, 66; mbr. of Com. 143; 145; 146; demands Tirard's arrest 153; Police Commiss. 157; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207; 320; wounded, 331; escapes 352.
Ostyn; signs Com. Centr. *affiche* 91; mbr. of Com. 143; 145; Pub. Wks. and Food Commiss. 157; votes agnst. Com. Pub. Saf. 207; signs minority declar. 227; 234; 303; escapes 352.

P

Parent, Hippolyte; 331, 332.
Parent, Ulysse; mbr. of Com. 142; 144; first secretary 156; Ex. Aff. Commiss. 157; 158; resigns 178; arrested and acquitted 351.
Parisel, Dr.; signs placard Jany. 6th, 66; mbr. of Com. 142; 145; 146; Food Commiss. 157; head of Scient. Deleg. 186; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207; forms fuséens 233; 234; malign purposes 266; escapes 352.
Pelletan; 20; 43; 46.
Phillipe, (Fenouillat); invades Picpus convent 188; mbr. of Com. 193; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207; 303; incendiarist, 314; 320; executed, 350.
Piat, 181; 343.
Piazza; promotes revolutionary attempt and is arrested 72; released 87; shot, 300.
Picard; member of Gov. of Nat. Def. 18; approves immediate elections 43; sanctions the call to arms on 31 Octr. 48; repudiates the compromise 52; dissatisfied with Trochu, 65; reappointed Minister by Thiers, 79; 90; issues *affiche* 91; orders retention of H. de V. 113; 114; quits Paris 115; decl. accused by Com. 168; 184.
Pillot; participates in 31st Oct. affair 43; arrested, 52; released 62; signs placard Jany. 6th, 66; mbr. of Com. 192; 193; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207; arrested and sentenced 351.
Pindy; Internationalist and Central Committee member 25; signs C. C. manifesto 31; signs placard Jany. 6th, 66; active Internationalist 66; member of Comité Central 84; 89; signs C. C. *affiche* 91; enters H. de V. 114; mbr. of Com. 142; 145; 146; Milit. Commiss. 157; votes agnst. Com. Pub. Saf. 207;

signs minority declar. 227 ; 234 ; 266 ; incendiarist, 295 ; 303 ; 305 ; escapes, 352.
Pothuau, Admiral ; 87 ; 168.
Pottier ; signs Central Committee manifesto, 31 ; mbr. of Com. 192 ; 193 ; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207 ; 303 ; escapes, 352.
Protot ; attends International Congress, 3 ; implicated in "Complot of Bombs" 8 ; negotiates with mayors 134–136 ; mbr. of Com. 142 ; 145 ; Jud. Commiss. 157 ; 162 ; visits Picpus 188 ; vote *re* April elections 192 ; 197 ; juries of accusation 199 ; 200 ; 207 ; 234 ; 303 ; 320 ; escapes, 352.
Prudhomme 105 ; 114.
Puget ; signs placard Jany. 6th, 66 ; mbr. of Com. 143 ; 145 ; 146 ; Lab. and Com. Commiss. 157 ; escapes, 352.
Pyat, Félix ; journalist 34 ; announces the fall of Metz 40 ; participates in 31st Oct. affair 43, 44 ; arrested, 52 ; released 53 ; his journal suppressed—starts another 71 ; elected deputy, 77 ; *le Vengeur* suspended 95 ; 140 ; mbr. of Com. 142 ; 145 ; 154 ; Exec. Commiss. 157 ; prudent counsel 168 ; dissem. false rumour 171 ; seeks to leave Paris 178 ; signs decree for demol. of Vend. Col. 185 ; 193 ; resigns and withdraws resign. 198, 199 ; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207 ; mbr. of same 208 ; dispute with Wrobleski 212 ; animus agnst. Rossel 217 ; ruse 218 ; 229 ; anxious 264 ; escapes 352.

R

Ranc ; deputy démissionnaire 89 ; mbr. of Com. 142 ; 144 ; 154 ; draws up proclamation, 156 ; Jud. Commiss. 157 ; Ex. Aff. Commiss. 157 ; 158 ; resigns 178 ; 351 ; escapes 352.
Ranvier, Augustin, 285 ; 343.
Ranvier, Gabriel ; signs Central Committee manifesto 31 ; participates in 31 Oct. affair, 43, 48, 51 ; arrested, 52 ; elected mayor of 20th arr. 54 ; released on parole, Jany. 10, 96 ; 112 ; enters H. de V. 114 ; negotiates with mayors 136 ; signs agreement 137 ; mbr. of Com. 143 ; 145 ; 146 ; presides at inaugura; tion 151 ; Milit. Commiss. 157 ; 177 ; vote *re* April elections 192 ; Com. Contr. for War 198 ; accompanies freemasons, 203 ; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207 ; mbr. of same 208 ; 218 ; 229 ; Vend. col. speech 230 ; 280 ; 303 ; assassinates hostages 306, 307 ; 320 ; orders shooting of hostages 329, 330 ; escapes 352.
Rastoul, Dr. ; mbr. of Com. 142 ; 145 ; Pub. Wks. Commiss. 157 ; vote *re* April elections 192 ; votes agnst. Com. Pub. Saf. 207 ; arrested and sentenced 351.
Régère ; signs Central Committee manifesto 31 ; participates in 31st Oct. affair 43 ; warrant for arrest of 52 ; signs placard Jany. 6th, 66 ; 128 ; mbr. of Com. 142 ; 145 ; 146 ; Fin. Commiss. 157 ; vote *re* April elections 192 ; votes for Com. Pub.

Saf. 207 ; 216 ; arrested and sentenced 351.

Rigault, Raoul ; self-installed at Prefecture, 26 ; signs Central Committee manifesto, 31 ; 47 ; dismissed from Prefecture 53 ; demands accusation of Govt. 76; 114 ; transacts Prefecture work 119; enters Prefecture 125 ; arrests Bonjean 128 ; mbr. of Com. 142 ; 144 ; 145 ; queries his election 153 ; Police Commiss. 157 ; prevents exodus, 160 ; 162 ; foe to religion 163 ; arrests priests 163; suppresses journal 164 ; arrests Assi, 174 ; arrests Archbishop and others 176; 177 ; 183 ; arrests Jecker 187 ; 188 ; vote *re* April elections 192 ; 196 ; 197 ; resigns office 199, 200 ; Public Prosecutor 201 ; 206 ; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207 ; arrests Blanchet 213; 222 ; arrests Allix 223; 232 ; 233 ; 234 ; arrests E. Clément, 237; 239 ; 240 ; 247 ; lives sumptuously, 265 ; 266 ; removes hostages 269–271, 284 ; shoots Chaudey and others 285, 286 ; incendiarist, 299 ; 300 ; shot, 300, 301 ; 352.

Robinet ; 142 ; 144 ; 157 ; 158 ; 178.

Rochard ; 142 ; 144.

Rochefort, Henri ; imprisoned 7 ; released and enters Gov. of Nat. Def. 19 ; 21 ; discontent therewith 24 ; 25 ; divulges information *re* Metz 40 ; action on 31st Oct. 44 ; resigns office 53 ; starts *le Mot d'Ordre* 71 ; elected deputy, 77 ; démissionnaire, 89 ; *le Mot d'Ordre* suspended 95 ; demands demol. of statue 165 ; suggests perquisitions 187 ; 229 ; escapes and is arrested 240 ; sentenced 353.

Rogeard 192, 193.

Rossel, Louis Nath. ; arrest and release of 170 ; 181 ; 186 ; Presid. of Crt.-Mart. 196 ; 197 ; 198 ; Delegate of War 205 ; obstacles to reforms 208 ; 210 ; his superiority 211 ; 212 ; encroachments of Com. Centr. 213 ; his indignation 215 ; 216 ; resigns 217 ; arrested 217, 218 ; escapes, 220 ; 238 ; executed, 350.

S

Saisset, Admiral ; experiences insubordination 87 ; apptd. Commandant of Nat. Gds. 121 ; in dilemma 123 ; plan of action 124 ; fails to obtain forces 127 ; 130 ; 132 ; his proclamations 133 ; 134 ; quits Paris 137.

Sanglier, 120 ; 137.

Serailler ; Internationalist and Central Committee member 25 ; signs C. C. manifesto, 31 ; mbr. of Com. 192 ; 193 ; votes agnst. Com. Pub. Saf. 207 ; signs minority declar. 227 ; 234 ; 303 ; escapes, 352.

Sérizier ; precipitates deadly conflict 70 ; arrested 70 ; released 96 ; protects Chanzy and Langourian 120 ; plot to open gates 236 ; arrests Dominicans 239 ; 272 ; massacres Dominicans 310–312 ; incendiarist 311 ; executed 350.

Sicard ; signs placard Jany. 6th, 66 ;

mbr. of Com. 193; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207; 226; escapes 352.
Sigoyer, Marquis de; 291; 316; 325.
Simon, Jules; member of Gov. of Nat. Def. 20; disapproves immediate elections 43; held prisoner in H. de Ville 46; assents to compromise 50; reappointed minister by Thiers, 79.
Soumain, General; 74.
Surat, Mgr.; 176; 338.

T

Tamisier, General; held prisoner in H. de Ville 46; assents to compromise 50; departs with Blanqui 51; resigns office 53.
Theisz; Internationalist and Central Committee member 25; signs C. C. manifesto 31; signs placard Jany. 6th, 66; active Internationalist 66; 128; mbr. of Com. 142, 143; 145; 146; Lab. and Com. Commiss. 157; reorganizes postal service 161; votes agnst. Com. Pub. Saf. 207; elicits commendation 210; signs minority declar. 227; 234; 303; escapes 352.
Thiers, Adolphe; declines office 20; negotiates for armistice 41; fails to obtain it 55; elected deputy 77, 78; Chief of Executive Power 78; appoints his ministers 79; signs peace preliminaries 85; 87; reinforcements for Paris 91; attempts to retake cannons 97–101; abandons Paris 111; 113; grants full powers to mayors 120; appts. Saisset Com. Nat. Gds. 121; vague instructions 123; refuses men to Saisset 127; 129; repudiates elections and the agreement 141; 149; offers of assistance to, 160; withdraws postal service 161; 165; clinches the issue 166; decl. accused by Com. 168; prudence 175; declines to release Blanqui 177; 180; 185; papers seized 191; delays final conflict 193; visited by freemasons, 203; anticipates the end of war 211; Moulin Saquet despatch, 212; demands "eight days"; house demolished 221; 224; incredulous 244; 245; acclaimed by Nat. Ass. 272; prognostications 278, 279.
Thomas, General Clément; Commander-in-Chief of Nat. Gds., 53; 59; in pursuit of Flourens, 69; resigns 82; murdered 107–109.
Tirard; elected deputy 77; consulted by Favre 92; obtains full powers from Thiers 120; organizes resistance to C. C. 121; mbr. of Com. 142; 144; resigns 154, 155.
Tolain, 77.
Tridon; attends International Congress, 3; Internationalist leader 25; signs Central Committee manifesto 31; participates in 31st Oct. affair 43; arrested, 52; released 53; signs placard Jany. 6th, 66; elected deputy 77; démissionaire, 89; mbr. of Com. 142; 145; 146; 154; Exec.

Commiss. 157 ; assents to march on Versailles 168 ; Com. Contr. for War, 198 ; votes agnst. Com. Pub. Saf. 207 ; signs minority declar. 227 ; dies at Brussels 352.

Trinquet; Internationalist and Central Committee member, 25 ; signs C. C. manifesto, 31 ; mbr. of Com. 193; Police Com. of Contr. 200 ; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207 ; 303 ; 319 ; arrested and sentenced 351.

Trochu, General ; Governor of Paris 11 ; encounters Favre 17 ; President of Gov. of Nat. Def. 20 ; 21 ; 27 ; his forces 32 ; 37 ; his "plan" 38 ; denounced 41 ; disapproves immediate elections 43 ; rescued from H. de Ville 46 ; repudiates the compromise 52 ; alters plan 58 ; sorties 59, 61 ; condemned by people 64 ; supercession decided upon 65 ; declaration on Jany. 6, 66 ; commands sortie 66, 67 ; dismissed as Governor of Paris 67.

U

Urbain ; signs placard Jany. 6th, 66 ; mbr. of Com. 142 ; 145 ; 146 ; Educ. Commiss. 157 ; vote *re* April elections 192 ; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207 ; 226 ; demands exec. of hostages 234 ; 241 ; misappropriates 265 ; condemns four prisoners 268, 269 ; arrested and sentenced 351.

V

Vaillant ; Internationalist and Central Committee member 25 ; signs C. C. manifesto, 31 ; signs placard, Jany. 6th, 66 ; National Guard officer 81 ; member of Comité Central 84 ; 128 ; mbr. of Com. 142 ; 144 ; 145 ; 146 ; sinister article in Jour. Off. 150 ; first assessor 156 ; Exec. Commiss. 157 ; assents to march on Versailles, 168 ; vote *re* April elections 192 ; 197 ; votes for Com. Pub. Saf. 207 ; escapes 352.

Vallès, Jules ; signs Central Committee manifesto, 31 ; 34 ; warrant for arrest of 52 ; signs placard Jany. 6th, 66 ; *Cri du Peuple* suspended 95 ; 140 ; mbr. of Com. 143 ; 145 ; 146 ; draws up proclamation 156 ; Educ. Commiss. 157 ; violent journalism 187 ; vote *re* April elections, 192 ; votes agnst Com. Pub. Saf. 207 ; signs minority declar. 227 ; significant phrase 233 ; 234 ; 303 ; 320 ; escapes, 352.

Varlin ; assists in founding International Assocn. 2 ; acquaintancè with Cluseret, 6 ; Central Committee member 25 ; signs C. C. manifesto, 31 ; influences International 66 ; demonstrates before H. de V. 69 ; 77 ; member of Comité Central 84 ; signs placard 88 ; 89 ; signs *affiche* 91 ; organizes federates 104 ; joins Bergeret 111 ; signs C. C. documents 118, 119 ; delegate to Finances 119 ; visits mayors 121 ; mission to Bank 127 ; suggests requisition orders 132 ;

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